

SŪRAH YŪSUF

[Joseph]

Sūrah Yūsuf was revealed in Makkah and it has 111 Verses and 22 Sections

Verses 1 - 6

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

الرَّحْمٰنُ تِلْكَ اٰیَةُ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿١﴾ اِنَّا اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْءٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ اَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا اَوْحَيْنَا اِلَيْكَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ وَاِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾ اِذْ قَالَ يُوْسُفُ لِاَبِيْهِ يٰٓاَبِيْهِ يٰٓاَبَتِ اِنِّیْ رَاَيْتُ اَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَّالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَاَيْتُهُمْ لِیْ سٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٤﴾ قَالَ یٰٓیْنَیْ لَا تَقْصُصْ رُءُیَاكَ عَلٰی اِخْوَتِكَ فِیْکَیْدُوْا لَكَ کِیْدًا ۗ اِنَّ الشَّیْطٰنَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ اَعْدُوٌّ مُّبِیْنٌ ﴿٥﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ یَحْتَبِیْكَ رَبُّكَ وَیُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَاْوِیْلِ الْاَحَادِیْثِ وَیَتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَیْكَ وَعَلٰی الْاٰلِ یَعْقُوْبَ کَمَا اَتَمَّهَا عَلٰی اَبُوْیْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْحٰقَ ۗ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِیْمٌ حَكِیْمٌ ﴿٦﴾

Alif Lām Rā. These are verses of the enlightening Book.

[1] We have sent it down, an Arabic Qur'an, so that you may understand. [2]

We narrate to you the best narrative by revealing this Qur'an to you, and surely before this, you were among the unaware. [3]

(It happened) when Yūsuf said to his father, "My father, I have seen eleven stars and the Sun and the Moon; I have seen them all prostrating to me." [4]

He said, "My son, do not relate your dream to your brothers lest they should devise against you a plan. Surely, Satan is an open enemy for mankind. And in the like manner your Lord will choose you and teach you the interpretation of events, and will perfect His bounty upon you and upon the House of Ya'qūb, as He has perfected it, earlier, upon your father, Ibrāhīm and Ishāq. Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing." [5-6]

Commentary

With the exception of four verses, Sūrah Yūsuf is wholly a Makki Sūrah. In this Sūrah, the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been described with continuity and order. Then, the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appears in this Sūrah alone. It has not been repeated anywhere else in the whole Qur'ān as such (with the exception of Sūrah Al-An'ām - 6:84 - and Sūrah Al-Mu'min or Ghāfir - 40:34 - where only the name of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been mentioned as a Messenger of Allah, in appropriate context). This is particular with the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, otherwise the stories and events concerning all blessed prophets have been introduced in the entire Qur'ān with great wisdom, part by part, and repeatedly too.

The truth of the matter is that world history and past experiences teach human beings what to do with their lives in the future. These have a natural effect of their own which acts better on minds and hearts as compared to the pull of formal education. This effect is deeper and fairly effortless. Therefore, in the Holy Qur'ān, which has been sent for all peoples of the world as their last testament, a marked portion of the entire history of the peoples of the world - a portion that serves as the master prescription for the betterment of the present and ultimate human condition - has been taken up electively and pragmatically. Furthermore, even this portion of world history has been introduced by the Holy Qur'ān, with its unique and unimitable style, in a manner that its reader simply does not get the impression that he or she was reading some book of history. In fact, whatever part of a certain story serves the need of driving home a lesson or tendering a good counsel on any given occasion, it is just that part which finds mention in that setting. And should

there be the need to allude to that particular part once again on some other occasion, it was repeated. Therefore, consideration was not given to sequential order in the narration of events in the story. At some places the earlier part of the story comes later, and the later part finds mention earlier. This special style of the Qur'ān carries a standing rule of guidance that reading or remembering world history and its past events is not an end by itself. Instead of that, the purpose of every human being should be to draw some lesson from every story and to cull and deduce some good advice from every information.

It is well-known that the human speech is classified into two forms: Descriptive (*khabar*) and imperative (*inshā'*). According to the knowledgeable scholars, it is the later form (i.e. imperative) that is the essential objective. Description in itself is not an end. A wise man ought to learn an imperative from every description, and make use of it for correcting and reforming himself.

That the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ has been narrated in a sequence could be because historiography is a discipline. It has particular rules of guidance for its practitioners. For instance, the narration should not be so brief as to make its understanding impossible, nor should it be so long as would make reading and remembering it difficult - which becomes clear from the Qur'ānic treatment of this story.

According to some narrations, another reason for this could lie in what the Jews had said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. To test him, they had asked him: If you are a true prophet, tell us why did the family of Ya'qūb move from Syria to Egypt and what had actually happened to Yūsuf ﷺ? It was in answer to that that this whole story was revealed. It was a miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and certainly a great proof of his prophethood - for he was simply an Ummiyy, one who was not taught by anyone, who had never read a book and who had lived in Makkah practically his whole life, yet, he narrated all events mentioned in the Torah correctly. In fact, he told them of what was not mentioned in the Torah. There are many injunctions and instructions which emerge from these narrations which will appear later in this commentary.

In the first of the set of verses cited above, the words: 'آل' 'Alif Lām Rā' are isolated letters (*al-Ḥurūf al-Muqatta'āt*) of the Holy Qur'ān. About

these, it is the universal verdict of the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Ṭabī‘īn that they are a secret between Allah Ta‘ālā, the speaker, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the addressee - which a third person cannot understand, nor is it appropriate for one to exert and insist on finding it out.

After that it was said: **بَلَكْ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ** (These are the verses of the enlightening Book). That is, these are verses of the Book which delineate the delimitations and restrictions of what is lawful and unlawful, including those of other things in all departments of human life, and thus gives people a simple, straight and moderate system of living, as promised in the Torah, and as already known to the Jews.

The statement made in verse 2 following immediately is: **إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ** (Surely, We have sent it down, an Arabic Qur‘ān, so that you may understand).

It is indicative of the situation that those who had asked to be informed of what had happened to Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) were the Jews of Arabia. So, Allah Ta‘ālā revealed this story in their language so that they may ponder over it and attest to the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and tune their lives in the light of the injunctions and instructions which emerge from this story.

This is the reason why the word: **لَعَلَّ** (*la‘alla*) has been brought in here in the sense of ‘so that’ because the mindset of these addressees was already known - that they would, despite having the benefit of very clear verses before them, still doubt and delay their acceptance of truth.

In the third verse, it was said: **نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الْغَافِلِينَ** (We narrate to you the best narrative by revealing this Qur‘ān to you, and surely before this, you were among the unaware).

This is to chasten the Jews that they had tried to test the Messenger of Allah which proved to be in vain, for its effect turned out to be just the reverse of what they had intended. It only went on to prove the excellence and authenticity of the Messenger of Allah in a far more evident manner. From this it became clear that he was already an Ummiyy and had no knowledge of world history. Now that he came to know of this needs an explanation and there can be no explanation for this except

that he was Divinely educated and blessed with revelation as a prophet of Allah Ta'ālā.

Moving on the verse 4, the text takes up the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which opens with the following words: إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ (It happened) [when Yūsuf said to his father, 'My father, I have seen eleven stars and the Sun and the Moon; I have seen them all prostrating to me.']

This was the dream seen by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interpreting which Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said: 'The eleven stars meant the eleven brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام; and the Sun and the Moon meant his father and mother.'

According to al-Qurtubī, though the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had passed away from this mortal world before this event, but in her place, his father was wedded to her sister. A maternal aunt already has love and concern for her sister's children as their natural mother would normally have. Now when she, after the death of her sister, comes to be the wife of the father, she would customarily be referred to as the mother.

The response given by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام appears in verses 5 and 6 in the following words: قَالَ يَبْنَىٰ لَا تَقْصُصْ رُءْيَاكَ عَلَىٰ إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا ۚ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ 'He said, 'My son, do not relate your dream to your brothers lest they [by finding out your greatness to come] should devise against you a plan. Surely, Satan is an open enemy for mankind ...' [for He seduces people to take such action for the sake of worldly wealth and power].'

Worth mentioning here are some religious issues which emerge from these verses:

The Nature of Dreams: Status and Kinds

First comes the nature of dreams and the status of events and information released by them. In Tafsīr Maḥzarī, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh رحمه الله تعالى has said: 'The reality of a dream is that, when the human self - as a result of sleep or unconsciousness - is freed from the management of the active body, it comes to see some shapes through the faculty of imagination. This is what a dream is. Then, it has three kinds, two out of which

are totally false, having no substance and base - while one, in terms of its being, is correct and true. But, even in this correct kind, some other contingents may occasionally intermingle and thereby make it defective and unreliable.

To explain this in detail, it can be said that the different shapes, images, situations and events one sees in a dream come in two modes. Sometimes, what one sees while awake returns to him transformed in a dream. And sometimes, it so happens that the Satan would make his input, introducing some forms, situations and events into a person's mind which would either be pleasing or terrifying. Both these kinds are false. They have no substance or reality, nor can they be interpreted in any actual sense. Out of these two, the first kind is Self-Suggestion (Ḥadīth An-Nafs) and the other, The Seductive Input of the Shayṭān (Taswīl Ash-Shayṭān).

The third kind, correct and true, is a kind of 'Ilhām (mode of inspiring) which is activated to warn a servant of Allah or to give him glad tidings. In other words, out of His unseen treasures, Allah Ta'ālā would put things in one's mind and heart.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: 'The dream of a believer is a dialogue in which he has the honour of talking to his Rabb.' This Ḥadīth has been reported by al-Ṭabarānī with a sound chain of authorities. (Maḥzarī)

Explaining this, Ṣufīs say that everything, before it comes to exist in this world, has a particular form in another universe called '*ʿālam-al-mithāl*',* a universe where, not only the substantial objects and physical realities, but also the attributes and noncorporeal meanings, have particular shapes and forms. When the human self is freed from the concerns of body management while dreaming, it sometimes gets connected to the universe of '*ʿālam-al-mithāl*'. There one would see the representative forms. Then, these forms are shown from the universe of the Unseen. At times, it would so happen that temporary disturbances would cause false imaginings mix up with the real, therefore, it becomes difficult for the interpreters to interpret the dream soundly. However, when free of discordant elements, they are real. But, even among these, some dreams

*. 'The world of autonomous images' - Henry Corbin.

cannot be interpreted because the actuality of the event is not clear. In such a case too, should the interpretation be wrong, the event itself ends up being different. Therefore, only those dreams will become a true 'Ilhām (inspiration) from Allah, and a proven reality, which originate from the command of Allah with the condition that no discordant elements have intermingled with them and that it has been interpreted correctly too.

All dreams of the blessed prophets are like that. Therefore, their dreams too have the status of Waḥy (revelation). The dreams of common believing Muslims are not free of many a probability. Therefore, they are not a binding argument or proof for anyone. Sometimes, their dreams get mixed up with temperamental or self-oriented elements. On other occasions, the after effects of sins overtake a true dream in the form of dark and murky silhouettes making it unreliable. Then, there could be occasions when it becomes difficult to spell out a correct interpretation from given parameters.

The three kinds of dreams mentioned here have been reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He said that there are three kinds of dreams. (1) The Satanic in which the mind sees forms and shapes released by the Shayṭān. (2) That which one keeps seeing while awake. These present themselves before one in a dream. (3) The third kind, which is correct and true, is the forty-sixth part of the ingredients of prophethood (Nubuwwah), that is, it is an 'Ilhām (inspiration) from Allah Ta'ālā.

The Meaning of Dream being a part of Nubuwwah:

An Explanation

In this kind, which is true and correct and which has been declared to be a part of prophethood in authentic prophetic Traditions, the narrations of Ḥadīth differ. In some, it has been identified as the fortieth part, while in some others, the forty-sixth. There are other narrations as well in which its being the forty-ninth, fiftieth and seventieth part has been reported. All these narrations have been compiled together in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī where, following the investigative judgement of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, it has been established that there is no contradiction among them, in fact, each narration is correct in its place. As for the numerical variation in determining the parts, it depends upon the different attending conditions of those seeing the dream. Whoever is armed with the

quality of truth, trust, honesty and is perfect of faith shall be the one whose dream will be the fortieth part of Nubuwwah. And whoever ranks somewhat lesser in these qualities, his will be the forty-sixth or fiftieth part of it, and whoever is still lesser, his dream will be the seventieth part of Nubuwwah.

Worth pondering here is what does a true dream being a part of prophethood mean? Tafsīr Mazharī has explained it by saying that the process of revelation to Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ as a Prophet of Allah continued for twenty three years. During the first biannual, this Divine revelation kept coming to him in the form of dreams. During the remaining forty five biannuals, it was communicated to him through the angel, *Jibra'īl al-Amīn*. Accounted for in this manner, true dreams turn out to be the fortieth part of the prophetic revelation. As for narrations where numbers vary on the lower or higher side, they either carry approximative statements, or stand dropped for lack of sound authority.

Imām al-Qurṭubī explains this by saying that there are occasions when one sees things in dreams which do not lie within his control. For example, one may see that he is flying high in the skies, or he may see things from the Unseen having access to which was not within one's control. If so, this cannot become possible through any means other than Divine support and inspiration itself - which, in reality, is an intrinsic attribute of prophethood. Therefore, it was declared to be a part of prophethood.

Refuting the Deception of the Qādiyāni Dajjāl [Imposter]

What has been stated above has led some people to run into a miserable error because they have taken the survival and continuity of this 'part' of prophethood in the world as the very survival and continuity of prophethood itself! This is against definite, categorical and absolute statements of the Holy Qur'ān and against countless sound and authentic Aḥādīth, and squarely against the collective belief of the entire Muslim Ummah in the finality of prophethood (the 'Aqīdah of Khatm Nubūwwat). In this exercise in deception, they have failed to realize that the presence of a part of something does not mean the presence of that thing in full. If there is a single nail or strand of hair belonging to a person present anywhere, no sane human being can say that the person is present here. Think of the many parts of a machine. If someone has one part, or

a screw of that machine present with him and he goes about declaring that he has such and such machine with him, the whole world would dismiss him as a liar or fool.

True dreams, as expressly explained in Ḥadīth, are, without any doubt, a part of Nubuwwah - but not Nubuwwah itself. What we know as Nubuwwah or prophethood has already ended with the Last of Prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ.

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لَمْ يَبْقَ مِنَ النَّبُوءَةِ إِلَّا الْمُبَشِّرَاتِ

That is, (in future) no part of the Nubuwwah will remain except Al-Mubashshirāt.

When the noble Ṣaḥābah asked for the meaning of Al-Mubashshirāt, he said: 'True dreams.' This proves that there is no Nubuwwah or prophethood of any kind or form for anyone anymore. What remains of it is only a small part which is called Al-Mubashshirāt or true dreams.

The Dream of a Sinning Disbeliever may also be True at times

It stands proved from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, and from experience, that sinners, even disbelievers, could see dreams which are true. In the Sūrah Yūsuf itself, mentioned there are the dreams of two prison mates of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which were true, and similarly, the dream of the king of Egypt which was true - though, the three of them were not Muslims. This was in the Qur'ān. Mentioned in the Ḥadīth is the dream of Kisrā (Cyrus) who had dreamt about the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ; that dream turned out to be true, though Kisrā was not a Muslim. The paternal aunt of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, 'Ātikah, had seen a true dream about the Holy Prophet ﷺ while she was still a disbeliever. In addition to that, the dream of the disbelieving King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, which was interpreted by Sayyidnā Dāniyāl (Daniel) عليه السلام was a true dream.

This tells us that the simple instance of someone seeing a true dream and the event taking place as seen cannot become a proof of the dreamer being pious and righteous, even Muslim. However, it is correct to say that this is how the customary practice of Allah operates - that the dreams seen by true and good people are generally true. The dreams

seen by sinners are generally from the category of self-suggestions and Satanic inputs - but, occasionally, the opposite could also happen.

In short, true dreams, as made clear in Ḥadīth, have no place in the lives of Muslims at large except that they can be either glad tidings, or warning, for them. They are no binding argument in any matter, neither for their own selves, nor for others. Some people, unaware of this truth, fall a victim to all sorts of scruples after having seen such dreams. Some of them would start taking these as a sign of having become a saint or something like that. Others would tend to give what they get out of these dreams the status of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. All these approaches are baseless. Specially so, when we already know that there is every likelihood that both kinds of imaginings, self-suggested or Satan-induced, can get profusely intermingled with true dreams.

Relating Dreams to Everyone is not Correct :

RULINGS

1. In verse 5: ... قَالَ يٰٓأَيُّهَا (He said, 'O my son ...'), Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has prohibited Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from relating his dream to his brothers. This tells us that a dream should not be related before a person who is not a well-wisher, nor before a person who is no expert in the interpretation of dreams.

According to Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A true dream is one of the forty parts of Nubūwwah. And a dream stays in suspension until related to someone. When related, and interpreted by the listener, it actualizes as interpreted. Therefore, one should not relate the dream to anyone, except to a person who is knowing and wise, or is, at least, a friend and a well-wisher.

As also referred to earlier, it appears in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A dream is of three kinds: (1) Glad tidings from Allah; (2) self-suggestions; (3) Satanic inputs. Therefore, should a person see a certain dream about which he feels good, then, he can relate it to others, if he wishes to do so. And, should he see something bad in it, let him not tell anyone about it. Instead, he should rise and offer Ṣalāh. The Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim also says: If one sees a bad dream, he should blow his breath three times towards his left side and seek the protection of Allah against its evil and tell no one about it. If this is done,

the dream will not cause any harm. The reason is that some dreams are composed of Satanic seductions. They will stand removed with this action. And, if the dream is true, the evil part of it - it can be hoped - will also be eliminated through this action.

2. As for the sense of the interpretation of a dream remaining hinged to it, Tafsīr Maḥzarī explains it by saying that some matters of destiny are not absolutely pre-decided, instead, they remain in a state of suspension, that is, if something was done, the impending misfortune will go away - and if it was not done, it will come. This is known as contingent or conditional destiny. In a situation like that giving a bad interpretation makes things turn bad while a good interpretation makes it come out good. Therefore, in the Ḥadīth from Tirmidhī mentioned above, relating a dream to a person who is not wise, or a well-wisher, has been prohibited. And there could also be another reason for this. When someone hears a bad interpretation of the dream seen, one finds himself overwhelmed by the thought that he is going to be hit by some misfortune. And it appears in Ḥadīth that Allah Ta'ālā said: *أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي* that is, 'I am with the opinion of My servant about Me.' In other words, 'whatever a servant of Mine believes Me to be, just that I become for him.' So, when one ends up believing that misfortune is going to come from Allah Ta'ālā, then, true to the customary practice of Allah, the coming of that misfortune becomes due against him.

3. Regarding the instruction given in the verse that something suggesting pain and misfortune seen in a dream should not be related to anyone, Ḥadīth narrations seem to indicate that this is not a legal prohibition. It is only an advice based on affection and sympathy. This should not be taken as something made unlawful by the Sharī'ah. Therefore, if related to someone, this will be no sin - because it appears in authentic Aḥādīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ - at the time of the Battle of Uḥud - said: I have seen in a dream that my sword, Zulfaqār, has broken and I saw some cows being slaughtered, the interpretation of which was the Shahadah of Sayyidnā Hamzah رضي الله عنه and many other Muslim *mujāhidīn*, a grave misfortune indeed. But, he had related this dream before the Ṣaḥābah. (Qurṭubī)

4. This verse also tells us that it is permissible to disclose the evil trait or intention of a person about to cause harm to a Muslim. Being an

effort to offset an evil design, this action is not included under Ghībah or backbiting. For example, if a person finds out that A is planning to commit theft in the house of B, or intends to kill him, then, he should forewarn B. This does not fall under the purview of Ghībah which is Ḥarām. This is what was done by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام when he had disclosed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that there was a danger to his life at the hands of his brothers.

5. If a person is blessed by Allah, and he apprehends that his addressee will be jealous against him, he should not mention the blessings of wealth, status, and things like that before that person. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

To make your objectives succeed, seek help from keeping them secret - because, every holder of blessing is envied in this world.

6. From this verse and from the later in which the plan and execution of killing or throwing Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in a well has been mentioned, it becomes evident that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were no prophets or messengers of Allah, otherwise, they would have not stooped to the act of conspiring to kill him, then to put him out of their way by lowering him down in a desolate well, and ultimately, to disobey their father - because, the blessed prophets عليهم السلام have to be free of all sins, and protected from them. Their reference as 'prophets' in the book of al-Ṭabari is not correct. (Qurṭubī)

Expertise in the Interpretation of Dreams is Bestowed by Allah on whom He wills

In the sixth verse, Allah Ta'ālā has promised some blessings for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: (1) كَذَلِكَ يَحْيِيكَ رَبُّكَ (And in the like manner your Lord will choose you ...) that is, He will choose him for His blessings and favours, something which manifested itself when wealth, recognition and power came into his hands in the country of Egypt. (2) وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ (and teach you the interpretation of events ...). The word: الاحاديث : 'al-aḥādīth' here means the dreams of people. It means that Allah Ta'ālā will teach him how to interpret dreams. This also tells us that interpreting dreams is a standing area of expertise which is bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā on a chosen few - everyone is not fit to have it.

Ruling:

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that ‘Abdullāh ibn Shaddād ibn al-Had said that the interpretation of this dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام actualized after forty years. This tells us that an instant actualization of an interpretation is not necessary either.

(3) As for the third promise: **وَيُتِمُّ بِعَمَلِهِ عَلَيْكَ** (and will perfect His bounty upon you), it refers to the bestowal of Nubūwwah (prophethood) upon him. And this is what has been alluded to in the later sentences: **كَمَا أَتَمَّهَا** (as He has perfected it, earlier, upon your father, Ibrāhīm and Ishāq). That which has been said here also indicates that the skill of interpreting dreams as given to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was also taught to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Ishāq, peace be on them both.

At the end of the verse, it was said: **إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ** (Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing). So He is. For Him, teaching an art to someone is not difficult, nor does He, as His wisdom would have it, teach this art to just anyone. Instead of that, He elects someone, in His wisdom, and lets him have this expertise.

Verses 7 - 20

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٍ لِّلسَّائِلِينَ ﴿٧﴾ إِذْ قَالُوا لِيُوسُفُ
وَإِخْوُهُ أَحَبُّ إِلَىٰ آيِنَا مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ ۚ إِنَّ آبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ
﴿٨﴾ ۖ أَفْقُلُوا يُونُسَ أَوْ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ أَبِيكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا
مِنَ الْبَاقِينَ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ ﴿٩﴾ قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ وَالْقَوْه
فِي غِيَّتِ الْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطُهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ إِن كُنتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ قَالُوا
يَا أَبَانَا مَا لَكَ لَا تَأْمَنَّا عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنَصِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾ أَرْسِلْهُ مَعَنَا
غَدًا يَّرْتَعْ وَيَلْعَبُ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَفِظُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ قَالَ إِنِّي لِيَحْزُنُنِي أَنَّ
تَذْهَبُوا بِهِ وَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَأْكُلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَأَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ غَافِلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالُوا
لِنْ أَكْلِهِ الذِّئْبُ وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّا إِذًا لَّخَسِرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا بِهِ

وَأَجْمَعُوا أَنْ يَجْعَلُوهُ فِي غَيْبِ الْجُبِّ ۚ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَهُمْ
بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَجَاءَ وَآبَاهُمْ عِشَاءً يَبْكُونَ ﴿١٦﴾
قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ
ۚ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَجَاءَهُ عَلَى قَمِيصِهِ
بَدَمٌ كَذِبٌ ۖ قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا ۖ فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ ۖ
وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا
وَارِدَهُمْ فَادْلَى دَلْوَهُ ۖ قَالَ يَبْشُرِي هَذَا غُلْمٌ ۖ وَأَسْرُوهُ بَضَاعَةً ۖ
وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ ۖ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ
ۚ وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾ ۚ

Surely, in (the story of) Yūsuf and his brothers, there are signs for those who ask [7] when they said, "Yūsuf and his brother are dearer to our father than we are while we are a powerful group (for him). Surely, our father is in clear error. [8] Kill Yūsuf or throw him in some land , so that your father's face may be your's alone, and after that you may become a righteous people." [9]

One of them said, "Do not kill Yūsuf, rather, cast him into the bottom of a pit, so that some wayfarer picks him up, if you are going to do something at all." [10]

They said, "Our father, why is it that you do not trust us with Yūsuf while indeed, we are his well-wishers. [11] Send him with us tomorrow, that he may eat and play, and of course, we are his guards." [12]

He said, "It makes me sad that you should take him away and I fear lest a wolf should devour him while you are heedless of him." [13]

They said, 'If the wolf eats him while we are a strong group, we are then losers indeed.' [14]

So, when they went with him and were determined to put him in the bottom of a pit (which they did). And We revealed to him, "You will (one day) tell them of this

deed of theirs while they will not recognize (you)." [15]

**And they came weeping to their father at nightfall. [16]
They said, "Father, we went running races and left
Yūsuf with our belongings and the wolf ate him up. And
you will never believe us, even though we are telling the
truth." [17]**

**And they came with fake blood on his shirt. He said,
"Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to someth-
ing. So, patience is best. And it is Allah whose help is
sought against what you describe." [18]**

**And there came some wayfarers and sent one of them to
go for water. So, he let down his bucket. He said, "What
a good news! Here is a boy." And they kept him hidden
as merchandise, while Allah was aware of what they
were doing. [19] And they sold him for a paltry price, for
a few silver-coins, and they were disinterested in him.
[20]**

Commentary

In the first of the fourteen verses cited above (7), a notice of warning has been served to the effect that the story of Yūsuf, peace be on him, should not be taken as a common story - because, in it, there are great signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, and His instructions, both for those who have asked and for those who would seek guidance through it.

The statement made here could be explained by saying that the signs referred to here are for the Jews who had put the Holy Prophet ﷺ to test by asking him to relate this story to them. When, according to a narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah, the news about him reached Madīnah. The Jews living there sent a group of their men to Makkah to make investigations and test his claim to prophethood. Therefore, the question they asked of him was put in a somewhat vague manner, that is, 'if you are a true prophet of Allah, tell us about the prophet one of whose sons was taken from Syria to Egypt, an event which had caused his father to become blind due to constant weeping during his absence.

The Jews had chosen to ask about this event because it was not widely known, nor did anyone in Makkah was aware of it. That was a time when there was no member of the people of Book living in Makkah, one

from whom some part of this story as appearing in the Torah and Injil could be ascertained. So, it was following this very question that the entire Sūrah Yūsuf was revealed, a Sūrah which relates the whole story of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb and Yūsuf عليهما السلام - and does it in such details as do not appear even in Torah and Injil. Therefore, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ described it, it was an open miracle shown at his blessed hands.

Alternately, this verse could also mean that this event in itself - aside from the question asked by the Jews - was full of great signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā and that, in it, there were major elements of Divine guidance, and instructions and injunctions. One could imagine the destiny of a child who was thrown in a pit when the power of Allah took over, carried him from one stage to the other guarding him all along, from his childhood to his youth. Then, Allah Ta'ālā has blessed him with a divine colour as He would do with His special servants for he stood steadfast as His servant against trials which would make obedience difficult. It is all the more difficult when one is young and challenged by opportunities. But, here is he, armed with the fear of Allah. He holds his ground, controls his self from desiring the undesirable and walks out clean from the stranglehold of temptation. Then, the story tells us how Allah rewards a person who takes to righteousness and fear of Allah as his conscious and determined way of life, how He makes him rise higher than his adversaries in power and recognition, and how they stand subdued before him finally. These are lessons and truths, all pointing to the great signs of the Divine power which can be realized by anyone who would care to look and find out. (Qurtubī & Maẓharī)

This verse mentions the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. The reference is to the twelve sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, including Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Every son from among them had their children. Their families prospered. Since the title by which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was known was Isrā'īl, therefore, all these twelve families were identified as Banī Isrā'īl (the children of Isrā'īl).

Out of these twelve sons, the eldest ten were from the first blessed wife of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, Sayyidah Layya, daughter of Layyān. After her death, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام married her sister, Rāḥīl * (Rachel). She became the mother of his two sons, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and

*. See editorial note on page 156.

Benyāmin (Benjamin). Therefore, Benyāmin was the only real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام). The rest of the ten were his half-brothers from the father's side. Rāḥīl, the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام), had died during his childhood at the time of the birth of Benyāmin. (Qurṭubī)

From the second verse (8), begins the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) which tells that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) saw that their father, Sayyidnā Ya'qub (عليه السلام) loved Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) unusually more than them who were older than him. Therefore, this made them envy him. And it is also possible that they had somehow found out about the dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) which may have led them to become uncomfortable at the prospect of his coming rise in status, and which may have made them envious of him. They talked about it among themselves: We see that our father loves Yūsuf and his brother Benyāmin much more than us, although we are ten of us and older than them. We have the ability and group strength to manage the affairs of the family while they both are small children who cannot do much. Our father should have noticed this and we are the ones he should have been loving more. But, what he is doing is open injustice. Therefore, you should either kill Yūsuf, or throw him away into some far out spot of land from where he could not come back.

In this verse, these brothers have referred to themselves as: عَصَبَةٌ ('uṣbah). This word is used in the Arabic for a group from five to ten. As for their remark about their father: إِنَّ أَبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (Surely, our father is in clear error), the word: ضَلَالٌ (*ḍalāl*) appearing here lexically means the error of straying. But, at this place, *ḍalāl* or error does not mean religious error. If so, such a connotation would have made all of them Kāfirs (disbelievers) - because, Sayyidnā Ya'qub (عليه السلام) is an exalted prophet of Allah Ta'ālā and such a thought in his case is an absolute Kufr.

And about the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام), it has been mentioned in the Qur'ān itself that they, later on, admitted their crime and requested their father to pray for their forgiveness which he accepted to do. This makes it obvious that their mistake was forgiven. Now, this can become possible only when all of them are believers - otherwise, the prayer for the forgiveness of a disbeliever is not permissible. This is the reason why there is no difference of opinion about their being believers, although 'Ulamā' do differ about these brothers being prophets. This tells

us that the word: ضَلَّال (ḍalāl: error) has been uttered at this place in the sense that he does not treat brothers equally in the matter of their rights.

The third verse (9) describes how the brothers exchanged opinions among themselves. Some suggested that Yūsuf be killed. Others opted for throwing him into a desolate pit so that the thorn in their side could be removed and they could thus become the sole recipients of their father's attention. As for the sin they would be earning for themselves by killing or throwing him in a pit, that was something which could be taken care of later when they could repent for what they did and thus become righteous. This is the meaning of the sentence: وَتَكُونُوا مِنْ أَعْدِيَ قَوْمًا (and after that you may become a righteous people) according to some reports. And the verse could also be taken to mean that things will come out right for them after the killing of Yūsuf because that focus of the father's attention on Yūsuf will not be there anymore, or that they would, once they have apologized to their father after the killing of Yūsuf, become normal as they were.

This proves that these brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) were not prophets because, in this case, they had committed many major sins, such as, the intention to kill someone innocent, disobedience to their father and causing pain to him, contravention of pledge, conspiracy, and things like that. Such sins, according to the Muslim consensus, cannot be committed by the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, even before they are ordained to be one.

Mentioned in the fourth verse (10) is that, hearing this whole conversation, one of these brothers advised that Yūsuf should not be killed. If something has to be done, let him be thrown into some pit of a well where he could remain alive so that when wayfarers stop at this well, they would take him out and away. Thus, it would serve their purpose while they would not have to take the trouble of traveling with him to some far out place. Some caravan passing this way would itself do this for them by taking him away to some distant destination.

The giver of this advice was their eldest brother, Yahūdā (Judah). Some narrations report that Ruebel (Rueben) was the eldest and it was he who gave this advice. And this is the same person mentioned later,

that is, he was the one who, when Benyāmin, the younger brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was detained in Egypt, came forward and said: How am I going to face my father when I go to him without him with me, therefore, I am not going back to Can'aan.

The expression used in this verse is: غِيَابَةُ الْحُبِّ (*ghayābatil-jubb*: bottom of a pit). Literally, *ghayābah* means everything which hides something in or makes it disappear. Therefore, a grave is also called *ghayābah*. And *jubb* refers to a well without raised sidings.

Another word: يَلْتَقِطُهُ (*yaltaqiṭhu*) appearing in the next sentence: يَلْتَقِطُهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ (so that some wayfarer picks him up) needs explanation. This word: التَّقَاطُ (*iltiqāṭ*) is a derivation from: لُقِطَ (*luqṭah*). The word: لُقِطَ (*luqṭah*) refers to something left or dropped which is found by someone without having the desire to have it. If it is inert, it is called *luqṭah*, and if it is live, it is identified as *laqīṭ* (لَقِيطٌ) in the terminology of Muslim jurists. A human being will be called a *laqīṭ* when he or she is a child, not rational and pubert. It is from this word that Al-Qurṭubī proves that, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was thrown in the pit of a well, he was a non-pubert child. In addition to that, the saying of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام that 'I fear lest a wolf should devour him (13)' also indicates his being a child - because, the likelihood of being eaten up by a wolf can only be imagined in the case of a child. As reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Shaiybah, the age of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was seven years at that time.

Some rules about the disposal of something owned by an unknown person (*luqṭah*)

At this place, Imām Al-Qurṭubī has given details of Islamic legal injunctions relating to '*luqṭah*' and '*laqīṭ*' for which this is not the appropriate occasion. However, it is necessary to understand a matter of principle operative in this connection. Islam has a system of its own in which the protection of the life and property of common people, the upkeep and cleanliness of walkways and streets, and similar other civic duties, have not been left in the sole charge of the departments of the government. Instead of that, it has made everyone obligated to the duty of keeping them safe and clean. The Ḥadīth has sternly warned those who make things difficult for passersby by crowding or lingering or depositing or throwing their belongings on public walkways and streets. It says: "The Jihād of a

person who blocks or clogs the passageway of Muslims is not acceptable.' Similarly, there is the instance of thorns or nails or broken glass or rocks and things like that which may be lying on walkways and which pose a danger of hurting others. Islam has not made their removal from public thoroughfare the sole responsibility of a city council or municipal board. Instead of that, it has made every believing Muslim responsible for it. Of course, it does that in a mode of persuasion and great reward and *thawāb* has been promised for those who do so.

If, on this principle, the property lost by a person is found by someone, his Islamic legal responsibility does not remain simply limited to not stealing it - it goes much beyond that. In fact, it also becomes his responsibility that he must pick it up as an article of trust, keep it safe, make an announcement, look for the owner and, when he finds him and his description of the lost property before him makes him sure that the lost property does belong to him, then, he should give it to him. And when, despite his announcement and search, the owner remains untraced and, given the general valuation and status of the lost property, one becomes convinced that its owner is not going to look for it anymore, then, one has two choices. If he himself is poor, he may use it personally; if not, he should give it in charity to those poor and needy. However, in both these situations, the lost property thus used shall be taken as *ṣadaqah* (charity) from the owner. The *thawāb* for it shall reach the owner - as if, it was deposited in his name in the Treasury of the Heavens.

These are golden principles of public service and social self-help. The responsibility of putting them in regular practice has been placed on every individual of an Islamic society. Only if Muslims would understand their religion and start acting in accordance with it, they will be noticed by the whole world with surprise as to how do they accomplish things so easily and so effectively, things which big departments of governments fail to accomplish at the cost of millions and billions.

Appearing in the fifth (111) and sixth (112) verse is the request of these brothers before their father in which they wondered why he would not trust them with Yūsuf, although they wished him fully well. So, they pleaded, he should send him along with them to enjoy himself freely by eating and drinking and playing with them and that they all shall be there to take care of him.

The tone of the very request made by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام indicates that they had already made such a request earlier too which was not accepted by their father. Therefore, in the present request, they seem to have tried to assure their father with added effort and insistence.

Permissibility of a trip for pleasure

In this verse, the permission sought from Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام is to go for an outing and have the freedom to enjoy eating and playing together. This was something Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not disallow at all. He only showed his reluctance in sending Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with them, which will appear in the next verse. From here we find out that going out to enjoy and play is allowed under permissible limits. Authentic Aḥādīth too seem to indicate its justification. But, the condition is that in this activity of fun and games, there should be no transgression of the limits set by the Sharī'ah, nor should it be mixed up with any act not permissible there. (Qurṭubī & others)

When the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام requested their father that he should send Yūsuf with them on a recreational outing, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام told them that he did not favour sending him out for two reasons: (1) He remains uncomfortable without him in sight and (2) he apprehends that, in the wilderness out there, it might so happen that they become neglectful at some time and a wolf might eat him up.

The apprehension of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام may have been caused either due to the abundance of wolves in Can'aan, or because he had seen in a dream that he is standing on top of a hill and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is there on the slope downhill. All of a sudden ten wolves surround him and try to attack him. But, one of the wolves came forward to rescue him from the rest. Once released, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام took refuge inside the terrain.

The interpretation of that dream manifested later when it turned out that the ten wolves were these ten brothers and the wolf which defended Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and saved him from being killed was his elder brother, Yahūdā (Judah). And the depth of the pit was the interpretation of his hiding under the land.

In a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, it has been re-

ported that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, because of this dream, felt the danger of an unfortunate situation coming at the hands of these brothers. Thus, in fact, they were the ones he had alluded to as wolves - but, in consideration of his wisdom, he did not lay the truth bare. (Qurtubī)

After hearing what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said, those brothers countered it by saying that his apprehension was strange in view of the presence of a strong group of the ten of them to protect Yūsuf. If a wolf could be expected to eat up Yūsuf despite their being there to guard him, it would render their very presence around him totally senseless. If so, they could not be taken as good for anything.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, acting with the elegance of a great prophet he was, did not say it plainly before his children that it was they about whom he feared a foul play because, firstly it would have been a painful statement to make against all of them and, secondly, there was the danger that such a statement from the father would have increased the enmity of the brothers to higher proportions - that is, if they somehow abandoned their idea of killing him now, they might have done so at some later occasion under some other excuse. For this reason, he allowed them to go. But, he did make sure that the brothers give him a solemn pledge that they would see that no harm comes to Yūsuf. As added precaution, he entrusted him with his elder brother Ruebel (Rueben) or Yahūdā (Judah) so that they specially take care of his needs there and see that he returns soon and safe. The brothers lifted Yūsuf up on their shoulders, and kept doing so one by one. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb followed them upto a certain distance to bid them farewell.

When these people, as described by Al-Qurtubī following historical narrations, disappeared from the sight of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, the brother on whose shoulders Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was perched threw him down on the ground. He started walking by himself. But, being too small, he could not keep pace with them and tried to seek help from another brother. He remained cold. So did every brother he went to for help. They told him that he better call for help those eleven stars, the Sun and the Moon he had seen prostrating to him - they should help him.

From here, Al-Qurtubī concludes that the brothers had somehow

found out about the dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. That dream became the cause of their extreme hostility.

Finally, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appealed to Yahūdā as his elder brother telling him about his plight. He was weak and small and needed protection, at least for the sake of their old father to whom they had given the pledge to help him. Yahūdā was moved and he told him that until he was alive, he would not let these brothers hurt him.

Thus, when Allah Ta'ālā put mercy in the heart of Yahūdā and the ability to do what was right, he told the other brothers of his that killing someone sinless was an extremely grave sin, therefore, they should fear Allah and take the innocent child back to his father. However, to make things easy on them, they could take a pledge from him that he would not complain to him in any way about their behaviour.

The brothers told Yahūdā: We know what you mean. You wish to rise higher than us in the sight of our father. So, you better listen to us. If you do anything to resist our intention, we shall kill you too. When Yahūdā realized that he alone could do nothing against his nine brothers, he told them: Well, if you have decided to get rid of this child, then, listen to me carefully. There is an old well nearby with a lot of wild growth in it and now a home for many lethal crawlers. Put him in that well. If a snake or scorpion bites and kills him there, you shall have what you are looking for. Thus, you shall remain free of the blame of shedding his blood by your own hands. And, in case, he still remains alive, then, may be there comes a caravan this way, lowers its bucket to draw water from it and finds him instead. It is likely that they would take him away with them to some other country in which case too you would have achieved your objective.

To this, all brothers agreed - as stated in the ninth of the present verses (15) cited above in the following words:

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا بِهِ وَاجْتَمَعُوا أَن يُجْعَلُوهُ فِي غَيِّتِ الْحَبِّ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ لِتَتَّبِعَنَّهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَذَا
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

'So, when they went with him and were determined to put him in the bottom of a pit (which they did). And We revealed to him (Yūsuf), 'You will (one day) tell them of this deed of theirs while they will not recognize (you).'

Here, the word: وَأَوْحَيْنَا (And We revealed) is the principal clause of the preceding conditional clause: فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا (when they went). The letter: وَاوْ (and) at this place in the former is *zā'idah* i.e. has no meaning (Qurtubī). The sense is: When the brothers did finally decide to throw Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the pit of the well, Allah Ta'ālā revealed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام words of comfort for him in which he has been given the glad tidings that some time in the future he will meet his brothers and that it will be a time when he would be free of any need of help from these brothers, rather, would have an upperhand over them. And by virtue of these changed circumstances, he would be in a position to take account of their unjust treatment meted out to their younger brother while they themselves would be unaware of the whole matter.

Imām Al-Qurtubī says that there could be two possible situations in this connection: (1) That the revelation came to him after he was thrown in the pit of the well and that it was to give him comfort in that state and to give him the good news that he would be delivered soon from this ordeal. (2) That Allah Ta'ālā had, much before he was thrown into the pit of the well, oriented Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with conditions and events he would face through a revelation in which he was also told that he would come out of this death-trap safely and that particular conditions will unravel when he would have the opportunity to admonish these brothers who would not even recognize him at that time as their own brother, Yūsuf.

According to Tafsīr Mazharī, this revelation which came to him during the time of his childhood was not the commonly recognized *wahy* or revelation sent to prophets - because, that is conferred on them at the age of forty. In fact, this was a revelation similar to that which was sent to the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. The usual channel of revelation as received by prophets started when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had reached Egypt and attained maturity - as stated in the Qur'an: وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا (And when he reached at the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge - 22). And Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥatīm and others have taken this revelation to be nothing but prophetic, though in an exceptional way, as was the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who was invested with prophethood during his childhood. (Mazharī)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said: 'After he had reached

Egypt, Allah Ta'ālā had forbidden Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) through a revelation that he should not report his circumstances back to his home. (Qurtubī) This was the reason why a prophet of Allah like Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) did not - even after having been released from the prison and later having the reins of the government of Egypt in his hands - make an effort to find a way through which he could have provided relief to his old and afflicted father by sending to him a message that he was safe and set.

Who knows or could know the wisdom of Allah *jalla thana'uh* hidden behind this arrangement? Perhaps, of the many considerations, it may also be His will that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) be sounded out that such boundless love for someone other than Allah was not ideally favour-worthy - and that by making those brothers come to Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) in need, the purpose may be to mildly censure him too for his conduct.

At this point, Imām Al-Qurtubī and other commentators have described the event of the lowering of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) into the pit of the well. When his brothers started doing that, he clung to the outer edge of the well. They took his shirt out and tied his hands with it. At that time, Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) pleaded for mercy from his brothers once again. But, once again, he got the same answer: Call those eleven stars who prostrate to you, let them help you. Then, they put him in a bucket and lowered him down into the well. When he was down as far as half the depth of the well, they cut off the rope releasing the bucket for a free fall. But, Allah being the protector of His prophet, saved him when he remained unhurt as he fell into the water. There was a protruding rock close to him. Safe and sound, he sat on it. According to some narrations, a command was given to Sayyidnā Jibra'īl (عليه السلام) who put him on the rock.

Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) remained in that well for three days. Hiding away from others, his brother, Yahūdā, brought food and water for him every day and lowered it down to him through a bucket.

As in verse 16: وَجَاءَ آبَاَهُمْ عِشَاءً يَبْكُونَ : They came weeping to their father at nightfall. Hearing the sound of their crying, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) came out and asked: What has happened? Was the flock of your goats attacked by someone? And where is Yūsuf? The brothers, then, said:

يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ
لَنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ

Father, we went running races and left Yūsuf with our belongings and the wolf ate him up. And you will never believe us, even though we are telling the truth.

Some rules about racing

In Aḥkāṁ al-Qurʾān, Ibn al-ʿArabī has said: Running races against each other is legitimate in the Shariʿah. It is a good habit which comes handy in Jihād. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as proved by authentic Aḥādīth, has personally participated in such running of races. Also proved is making horses run against each other (not to be confused with institutionalized horse-racing with bets, as clarified later). Out of the noble Companions, Sayyidnā Salamah ibn al-Akwaʿ ؓ ran a one-on-one race against a person and won it.

That the racing of horses as such is permissible stands proved from the verse under reference and from Ḥadīth reports cited above. In addition to the racing of horses, mutual competition in racing and archery and in other fields is also permissible, and equally permissible is the giving of awards from a third party to the winner in this mutual competition. But, fixing an amount of money in a bilateral agreement that the loser will pay it to the winner is gambling or Qimār which has been declared Ḥarām or unlawful by the Holy Qurʾān. Today, none of the prevailing forms of horse racing is free from gambling and Qimār. Therefore, all of them are Ḥarām, impermissible and unlawful.

Mentioned in the previous verses was that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ؑ, after talking to each other back and forth, finally put him down in a desolate well and returned to their father telling him that he has been eaten up by a wolf. From verse 18, the story onwards has been taken up in the following words: وَجَاءُوا عَلَى قَمِيصِهِ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ (And they came with fake blood on his shirt) that is, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ؑ came back with his shirt they had smeared in fake blood so that they could make their father believe that he has been eaten up by a wolf.

But, Allah Taʿālā had His way of exposing their lie. He made them neglect something else they should have done besides smearing the shirt with fake blood. Had they also torn the shirt, it would proved his being

eaten up by a wolf. Here they were coming with an intact shirt smeared with the blood of a kid goat and trying to deceive their father. After seeing this shirt totally unscratched, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said: My sons, certainly wise was this wolf who ate Yūsuf in a way that his shirt was not torn from anywhere.

Thus, their deceit was exposed before Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام and he said:

بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا فَصَبِرْ جَمِيلٌ وَاللَّهُ الْمُسَعِّدُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ

Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best. And it is Allah whose help is sought against what you describe.

Two Rulings:

1. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has used the intact shirt as evidence to establish that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were lying. This tells us that a Qāḍī or judge should also keep an eye on circumstantial evidence alongwith the claims and arguments of the parties concerned (Qurtubī).

Al-Māwardī has said: The legendary shirt of Yūsuf is a wonder of the world in its own way. Three great events of prophetic annals are connected with his shirt: (I) The first event relates to the smearing of the shirt with fake blood, cheating a father and the evidence of the shirt which established the lie. (II) The second event relates to Zulaikhā in which it is the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which appears as the conclusive evidence. (III) The third event relates to the return of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb's eyesight in which it is the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which stands out as the cause of that miracle.

2. Some 'Ulamā have said that the comment: بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا (Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something - 18) made at this time before his sons was also made at the time when Benyāmin, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, was detained in Egypt having been charged with theft. When his brothers reported this incident to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, he said: بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ (Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something - 83). Worth pondering here is that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had made both these comments as based on his opinion. The first of them turned out to be true; the other was not - because, in this,

the brothers were not to be blamed. This tells us that a wrong personal opinion is possible even from prophets initially - though, later on, they are not left to stand by that wrong opinion by means of Divine revelation.

According to Al-Qurṭubī, it proves that an error of opinion can be committed by the highest of the high. Therefore, every man or woman of opinion should take his or her opinion as suspect, and should not become so rigid about it as not to be ready to listen or entertain what others have to say.

There is No Chance or Accident in Divine Arrangements

It is said in verse 19: وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَهُ (And there came some wayfarers and sent one of them to go for water. So, he let down his bucket). The word: سَيَّارَةٌ (*sayyāra*) means wayfarers or a caravan. Wārid (وارد) is a person who moves ahead of the caravan as its vanguard. Such a person is responsible for taking care of the needs of the caravan, water being one of them. Idlā' (إدلاء) means to lower the bucket into the well to draw water. The sense is that a caravan passed by this part of land by chance. According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this caravan was coming from Syria on its way to Egypt. Having lost its bearing, it strayed into this desolate place and sent some of his men to bring water from the well.

That the Syrian caravan lost its regular route, reached that exact spot and decided to send their water-carrier to that deserted well is a sequence of events which is referred to by people as accidental. But, the knower of the secret of the creation knows that all these events are chains of a system which is breathtakingly coordinated and formidable. It is but the Creator of Yūsuf, and his Protector, who moves the caravan away from its set route and brings it here and sends its men to this deserted well. This is a mirror of all other states and events which common people see as accidental happenings - and philosophers as contingents - all of which is based on an unawareness of how the system of the universe really works. Otherwise, in creation, there is no chance or accident (which Einstein, though no formal believer, did concede: 'God does not play dice!'). However, the most true Creator of the universe is known by the majesty of His unique state of being. He is, as the Qur'ān declares:

فَعَالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ

Doer of what He intends - 85:16

His wisdom works in unimaginable ways when He creates conditions and circumstances which do not seem to synchronize with the obvious sequence of events. When this happens, one fails to comprehend the reality, and takes what he does not understand as something accidental.

However, their man whose name has been identified as *Malik ibn Du'bar* reached that well, lowered his bucket which *Yūsuf* saw as Divine help coming down. He took hold of the rope. Up it came with no water but with the shining face of someone whose instant mystique of beauty and signs of forthcoming spiritual excellence were no less impressive than the real greatness he was going to achieve in the future. Intrigued, surprised and flushed with delight, the man looked at this young, handsome and promising child coming suddenly face to face before him emerging from the depths of a well and making him exclaim: *يُبَشِّرُنِي هَذَا غُلَامٌ* (What a good news! This is a boy). In the *Ḥadīth* concerning the Night of *Mi'raj* (the Ascent to the Heavens) appearing in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of *Muslim*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'When I met *Yūsuf* عليه السلام, I saw that Allah *Ta'ālā* has blessed him with half of the beauty of the whole world, while the other half has been spread over the rest of it.'

Following immediately after is the statement: *وَأَسْرَوْهُ بِضَاعَةً* (And they kept him hidden as merchandise). It means that *Malik ibn Du'bar*, when he first saw this boy, did exclaim taken by surprise. But, an afterthought over the matter made him decide not to let this be known. Instead, he thought, he would keep him hidden from others so that he could sell him for good money later. He did not want the caravan to know about it for the whole caravan would then be claiming a share in the money so acquired.

However, the expression could also mean that the brothers of *Sayyidnā Yūsuf* عليه السلام, by concealing the truth of the matter, themselves made him into merchandise. This is as it appears in some narrations where it is said that *Yahūdā* used to carry food to *Sayyidnā Yūsuf* عليه السلام every day while he was in the well. On the third day, when he did not find him there, he returned to his brothers and told them about it. Together, they

went there, made investigations, and found him with the people of the caravan. They told them: This boy is our slave. He has escaped and you have done something bad by detaining him in your possession. Mālik ibn Du'bar and his companions were scared lest they be taken as thieves. Therefore, they started talking about a deal to purchase him from the brothers.

Thus, the verse would come to mean that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام themselves made him into merchandise and sold him out. After that it was said: وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ (while Allah was aware of what they were doing). The sense is that Allah Ta'ālā, in His perfect knowledge, was fully aware of what the legendary brothers of Yūsuf would do, and also that which will be done by the people of the caravan who would buy him. Allah Ta'ālā had all power to undo the designs of both, but it was under His own wise considerations that He let these designs carry on.

In this sentence, according to Ibn Kathīr, there is an element of guidance for the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well. It tells him that nothing his people are doing to him, or will do in the future, is outside the scope of Allah's knowledge and power. He could, if He so willed, change everything and everyone outright. But, wisdom demanded that they be allowed to show their power at this time. Finally, by making him overcome them, it will be truth itself seen triumphant over them - as was done in the case of Yūsuf عليه السلام.

Verse 20 begins with the words: وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ (And they sold him for a paltry price, for a few silver-coins, and they were disinterested in him). In Arabic, the word: شِيراً (*shira'*) is used for buying and selling both. The probability of both meanings exists here. If the pronoun is reverted back to the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, it will mean selling - and if applied to the people of the caravan, it would mean buying. Thus, the sense would be: 'the brothers of Yūsuf sold him - or, the people of the caravan bought him - for a paltry price, that is, for a counted few *dirhams* in return.'

Al-Qurtubī says: The Arab traders used to transact deals involving big amounts by weight while, for amounts not more than forty, they would go by count. Therefore, the word: مَعْدُودَةٌ (*ma'dūdah*: few) used with:

دَرَاهِمَ (*darāhim*: plural of *dirham*: silver-coins) tells us that the count of *dirhams* was less than forty. Ibn Kathīr, citing the authority of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه, has written that the deal was closed at twenty *dirhams* which the ten brothers had divided among themselves at the rate of two *dirhams* per person. As for the exact amount of *dirhams*, reported there are other narrations as well which put them as twenty two and forty. (Ibn Kathīr)

In the last sentence of the verse: وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ (and they were disinterested in him), the word: الزاهدين (*az-zāhidīn*) is the plural of *zāhid* which is a derivation from *zuhd*. Literally, *zuhd* means indifference, disinterestedness. In usage, the lack of interest in and the avoidance of wealth and property in worldly life is referred to as *zuhd*. The meaning of the verse is that the brothers of Yūsuf were really not interested in any financial gain for themselves in this matter. Their real purpose was to separate Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from their father. Therefore, they struck a deal for a very few *dirhams*.

Verses 21 -23

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ لِمَرْأَتِهِ أَكْرِمِي مَثْوَاهُ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا
أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا ۖ وَكَذَٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ ۖ مِنْ
تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ ۖ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا ۗ وَكَذَٰلِكَ
نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَرَأَوْدَتُهُ أَلَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ
وَعَلَّقَتِ الْأَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ
مَثْوَايَ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

And the one who bought him from Egypt said to his wife, "Make his stay graceful. He may be useful for us. Or, we may adopt him as a son." And thus We established Yūsuf in the land, so that We should teach him the interpretation of events. And Allah is powerful in (enforcing) His command, but most of the people do not know. [21]

And when he reached the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge, and this is how We reward those good in deeds. [22]

And she, in whose house he was, seduced him away from his (resisting) self and bolted the doors, and said, "come on!" He said, "May Allah save me. Surely, he is my master. He has given me a good lodging. Surely, the wrongdoers do not prosper." [23]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses was an early account of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) as to how the people from the caravan took him out of the well, and how his brothers made him out to be their escaped slave and traded him for a few *dirhams*. First of all, they did not know the value and station of their great brother. Secondly, their real purpose was not to make money by selling him - they wanted to remove him away from his father. Therefore, they did not stop at simply selling him because they felt the danger that the caravan may somehow leave him behind as a result of which he may somehow reach their father and tell him all about their conspiracy. So, according to a report from Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, these people waited for the caravan to leave with him for Egypt. When the caravan actually departed, they went with the caravan upto a certain distance warning them on the way that he is in the habit of running away, therefore, they should not leave him free to move around, better still, they should tie him up. Thus, the caravan, unaware of the precious 'merchandise' they were carrying with them, took him in that condition as far as Egypt. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

The part of the story as taken up onwards in the present verses shows the eloquent brevity of the Qur'ān when sections of the story which can be understood independently have not been necessarily described. For instance, the trip of the caravan through various stages en-route Egypt and the actual selling of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) there. All this has been skipped. Stated from here is:

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ لَا مَرْأَتَهُ أَكْرَمِيْ مَثْوَاهُ

And the one who bought him from Egypt said to his wife,
'Make his stay graceful ...'.

According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, when the caravan reached Egypt and

offered him for sale, people vied with each other with increasing bids which rose to gold, to musk and to silk equal to his weight.

But, Allah Ta'ālā had destined this human treasure to go to the most powerful authority of the time in Egypt, the 'Azīz of Miṣr. He beat all the bids and bought Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام).

As we already know from the statement of the Holy Qur'ān, all these things happening were nothing accidental. Instead, they were parts of the formidable plan put into action by the most exalted Lord Himself. That Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) will be bought in Egypt by the highest of the high in that country was certainly a call of destiny. According to Ibn Kathīr, this man who bought Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) in Egypt was what we may call the Finance Minister of Egypt. His name has been cited as Qiṭfir, or 'Iṭfir. The King of Egypt at that time was Ruiyyān ibn Usayd, an Amalkite (who, later on, embraced Islam at the hands of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام)) and died as a Muslim during the lifetime of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) (Maḥzarī). The name of the wife of the 'Azīz of Egypt who had bought him has been given as Ra'eel, or Zulaikhā. So, the 'Azīz of Miṣr, called Qiṭfir (Potiphar), instructed his wife to provide good lodging for Yūsuf, not to treat him like common slaves and see that good arrangements are made for him.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd (رضي الله عنه) said: 'Three men turned out to be the best physiognomists of the world: (1) The 'Azīz of Miṣr who discovered the inner excellence of Yūsuf (عليه السلام) from his outer appearance and gave those instructions to his wife; (2) the daughter of Sayyidnā Shu'ayb (عليه السلام) who told her father about Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام): يَابْتَ اسْتَاجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنْ اسْتَاجَرْتُ الْقَوَى الْأَمِينُ (O my father, retain him on wages. Surely, the best one for you to employ is the one who is strong and trustworthy - 28:26); (3) The third person is Sayyidnā Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) who chose Sayyidnā 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) to be the Khalīfah after the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). (Ibn Kathīr)

The next sentence of the verse is: وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ (And thus We established Yūsuf in the land ...). Given here is the good news of what would happen in the future, that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) who has entered the House of the Azīz of Miṣr at this time as a slave shall soon be the highest ranking man in the country of Egypt when the power of governance comes into his hands.

In the statement which follows immediately after, that is: وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ (so that We should teach him the interpretation of events), if the letter واو (*wāw*) appearing at the beginning of the sentence is taken as: عطف (*'atf* : conjunctive), a sentence will be considered as understood which will mean that 'We established Yūsuf in the land so that he brings forth peace in the world through equity and justice, works towards the economic and social betterment of the people of the country, and so that We teach him to put things right where they belong. The general sense of the later is something which is inclusive of the comprehension of Divine revelation, its implementation in practice, and the acquisition of all supportive areas of knowledge, and the correct interpretation of dreams as well.

Verse 21 ends with the statement: وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَى أَمْرِهِ (And Allah is powerful in (enforcing) His command ...). In other words, it means that Allah Ta'ālā is powerful and fully in control over what He wills and when He does so will, all outward chains of causes in this world start falling in line with His will - as said the Holy Prophet ﷺ in a Ḥadīth: 'When Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He makes all worldly causes ready to act accordingly.' But, says the last part of the sentence: وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ that is, most of the people do not understand this reality. They have their eyes on obvious causes. These they take to be everything and keep going after them all the time. That there is the Causer of all Causes and the Holder of Absolute Power over everything is a thought they would seldom pay heed to.

In the first sentence of the second verse (22), it is said: وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا (And when he reached at the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge ...).

At what age did he reach the prime of his age? In this, commentators differ. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Mujāhid and Qatādah رضي الله تعالى عنهم say that his age was thirty three years. Ḍaḥḥāk رضي الله تعالى عنه puts it at twenty, and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رضي الله تعالى عنه at forty. However, all of them agree that the bestowing of wisdom and knowledge upon him referred to at this place means the bestowal of Nubūwwah, the station of prophethood. This also tells us that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was invested with Nubūwwah much later than his arrival in Egypt - and the Waḥy (revelation) sent to him while he was in the depth of the well was not the Waḥy(reve-

lation) technically identified with Nubūwwah. Instead of that, it was a revelation in the literal sense which can also be sent to non-prophets - as it has appeared in the case of the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, and about Sayyidah Maryam.

In the second sentence of the second verse (22), it was said: وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (and this is how We reward those good in deeds). The sense is that delivering Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from elimination and making him reach the office of power and honour was an outcome of his righteousness, fear of Allah and good deeds. This was something not restricted to his person alone. In fact, whoever acts the way he did, shall receive the blessings of Allah in the same fashion.

Moving to verse 23, the words of the text are:

وَرَأَوْدَتَهُ الْتَىٰ هُوَ فِيْ بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَّفْسِهِ وَغَلَّقَتِ الْأَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ

And she, in whose house he was, seduced him away from his (resisting) self and bolted the doors, and said, 'come on!'.

From the first verse, we know that this woman was the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr. But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān has elected to bypass the possibility of mentioning her by a brief expression as the wife of 'Azīz. Instead, it has chosen to use the expression: الَّتَىٰ هُوَ فِيْ بَيْتِهَا (in whose house he was). The hint given here is that the efforts of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to save himself from falling into sin were further complicated by the fact that he lived in the house of this very woman, under her protection, and as such, disapproving and discarding her verbal advance was no easy task.

The Strongest Defence Against Sin is the Seeking of Protection from Allah Himself

How was he able to do that? There was an outward cause to this. When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام found himself surrounded from all sides, he took the ultimate recourse. So, like a prophet he was, first of all, he sought the protection of Allah. He said: قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ (May Allah save me!). We see that he did not place his sole trust in his determination and resolve to hold out against the invitation to sin - he sought the refuge of Allah first. And it is obvious that anyone who enjoys the protection of Allah can never be moved away from the right path by anyone. It was only after having that coverage, that he started acting as a prophet

would, with wisdom and earnest good counsel. Addressing Zulaikhā directly and personally, he advised her that she too should fear Allah and give up her intention. He said:

إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ مَوْلَايَ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ

Surely, he is my master. He has given me a good lodging. Surely, the wrongdoers do not prosper.

As obvious, it means: Your husband, the 'Azīz of Miṣr is my master who has raised and supported me and has given me a good home to live in. He is my benefactor. How can I even think of violating his honour? This is great injustice and those who commit injustice never prosper. Implied therein was a lesson for Zulaikhā too who was told: When I know his rights on me for having been my master and caretaker for a lesser time than you, then, being his wedded wife of years, you should certainly know his rights on you much more than I do.

At this place, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has called the 'Azīz of Miṣr his Rabb - though, it is not permissible to use this word for anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā. The reason is that words like this create either a suspicion of Shirk, or a resemblance with those who commit Shirk. Therefore, the use of such words has been prohibited in the Shari'ah of Islam. It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 'Let no slave call his master his Rabb and let no master call his slave his *'abd* or servant.' But, this is a unique characteristic of the Islamic Shari'ah where, alongwith the prohibition of Shirk, everything else in which there is the least doubt that they may become the conduits of Shirk has also been prohibited. In the religious codes of past prophets, though Shirk has been strictly blocked but there was no restriction placed on the sources and inlets of Shirk. This was the reason why depiction of images was not prohibited in past religious codes. But in the Shari'ah of Islam, being valid upto the Last Day, full attention was given to protect it from being affected by Shirk. So, the sources and mediums of Shirk, such as, image and words - which arouse suspicion of Shirk were also prohibited. However, the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام : إِنَّهُ رَبِّي (Surely, he is my master), was correct in its place.

And it is also possible that the pronoun in: إِنَّهُ (*innahū*) reverts to Allah Ta'ālā which would mean that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had called

Allah his Rabb and it was He who, in the real sense, gave him good lodging, and that disobedience to Him was the greatest injustice, and that the unjust never prosper.

Some commentators, Suddīyy, Ibn Ishāq and others have reported that during the course of this privacy, Zulaikhā started praising his looks with the purpose of softening his resistance. She said: How beautiful are your hair! Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: After death, these hair will be the first to part away from my body. Then, she said: How beautiful are your eyes! He said: After death, they will become water and flow down my face. Once again, she said: How beautiful is your face! Thereupon, he said: All this will be eaten up by the earth below. He was looking ahead. This was his concern for the 'Ākhirah. Allah Ta'ālā had set it upon him in the prime of his youth and that made all charms of mortal life turn into dust before him. It is true that the concern for 'Ākhirah is something which can keep every human being protected from every evil wherever he or she may be. May Allah bless us all with this concern.

Verse 24

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ ۖ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَنَّ رَأَىٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ ۖ كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ
عَنهُ السُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ ۚ إِنَّهُ مِنُ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

And she certainly desired him. And he had desired her - had he not seen the proof from his Lord (he could have indulged). This We did to turn away from him evil and lewdness. Surely, he is among Our chosen slaves. [24]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse was the great trial and test of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in that the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr bolted the doors and tried to invite him to sin assembling together in that effort all circumstantial temptations to attract and to make him become indulgent. But, Almighty Allah kept this righteous young person standing steadfast in such severe trial. The details of what transpired have been given in this verse. Said here is that Zulaikhā was busy persuing her obsessive thought any way, but emerging in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf too, there was some non-voluntary tilt towards her as would be the natural conse-

quence in such a situation. But, it was exactly at that time that Allah Ta'ālā brought before Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام His argument and proof, because of which, that non-voluntary tilt, rather than increase, actually died out totally - and, beating the pursuit, he ran.

In this verse, the word: *هَمَّ* (*hamm* : thought) has been attributed to Zulaikhā and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام both as in: *وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا* (And she desired him. And he had desired her). And we know that the '*hamm*' or thought of Zulaikhā was that of sin. This could have raised a doubt that the 'thought' of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام may also have been of a similar nature - and this is, based on the consensus of the entire Muslim Ummah, contrary to the great station of a Nabīyy (prophet) and Rasūl. The reason is that the majority of the Muslim Ummah holds the standard belief that the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, are protected against all sorts of sins, minor or major. As for a major sin, it can neither be committed by them intentionally, nor is it possible through inadvertance or mistake. However, the probability that a minor sin could be committed through inadvertance or mistake does exist - but, on this too, the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, are not allowed to remain - instead, they are warned and made to move away from it. (*Musāmarah*)

Besides the fact that this question of the 'Iṣmah of Anbiyā' (the state of being under Divine protection with which prophets are blessed) stands settled and proved under the authority of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, it is also necessary, rationally too - because, should there remain the probability of a committal of sin by the Anbiyā' عليهم السلام, there remains no way one could place trust in the Dīn (religion) and Waḥy (revelation) brought by them, and that their very coming into the world with a Divine Book revealed to them becomes totally fruitless. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā has kept every prophet of His totally *ma'ṣūm* from every sin (*ma'ṣūm*: technically, sinless or infallible; literally, protected by Allah).

So, speaking generally, it stands established that the 'thought' which crossed the mind of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was not a thought to be counted in the degree of sin. For details, we should understand that the word: *هَمَّ* (*hamm*: thought) in the Arabic language is used to convey two meanings: (1) Intend and be determined to do something; (2) a simple scruple in the heart or the appearance of a thought beyond one's control. In the first situation, it is included under sin, and is accountable. Howev-

er, should someone, after having made the intention, were to leave off this sin at his own choice just because of the fear of Allah, then, according to the Ḥadīth, Allah Ta'ālā replaces the sin and enters a good deed in his or her Book of Deeds. And in the second situation - that is, in the event there comes a simple scruple and non-voluntary thought, without any intention to put the thought into practice, for instance, a normal turn of thought towards cool water during the fasts of summer which is natural and experienced by almost everyone, though there is no intention there to go about drinking water while fasting. So, a thought like that is neither within one's control, nor is there any accountability and sin in it.

In a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'Allah Ta'ālā has forgiven the scruple and thought of sin for my Ummah - if not put into practice.' (Qurtubī) And in the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the two Ṣaḥīḥs, that is, Al-Bukhārī and Muslim), it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurayrah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Allah Ta'ālā says to the angels: When My servant intends to do good, write a good deed in his or her Book of Deeds just because of that intention. And when he or she has completed this deed, write down ten good deeds. And if a servant intends to do a sin, then leaves it off due to the fear of Allah, write one good deed in his or her Book of Deeds in lieu of that sin. And if he or she does fall into that sin, write it as one sin only.' (Ibn Kathīr)

Al-Qurtubī has, in his Tafsīr, proved the use of the word: *هَمْ* ('*hamm*': thought) covering both these meanings through evidences from Arab usage and poetry.

This tells us that the word: '*hamm*' appearing in this verse has been attributed to both Zulaikhā and Sayyidnā Yūsuf ؑ but there is a big difference between the '*hamm*' or thought of both. The former is included under sin while the other has the status of a non-voluntary scruple which is not included under sin. The descriptive style of the Holy Qur'ān is itself a testimony to this - because, had their '*hamm*' or thought been identical, it would have been sufficient to say it in a dual form, such as: *وَلَقَدْ نَمُوْا*, that is, the two of them desired, which was brief too. But, leaving this option aside, the '*hamm*' or thought of both was described separate from each other: *هَمَّتْ بِهٖ وَهَمَّ بِهَا* (And she certainly desired him. And he had

desired her). Then, added to the 'hamm' or thought of Zulaikhā was the word of emphasis: لَقَدْ (*laqad*). With the 'hamm' or thought of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the emphasis of the letters: لām (*lām*) and: qad (*qad*) is not there. This tells us that, through this particular expression, the purpose is to emphasize that the 'hamm' or thought of Zulaikhā was of some other nature while that of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, of some other.

According to a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, when this test was faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the angels submitted before Allah Ta'ālā: This sincere servant of Yours is thinking of sin, though he knows its curse fully well. Allah Ta'ālā said: You wait. If he commits this sin, write what he has done in his Book of Deeds. And if he abstains from committing it, do not record it a sin, instead, enter a good deed in his Book of Deeds - because, he has surrendered his desire only out of fear for Me (which is doing good at its best) (Qurṭubī)

To sum up, it can be said that the thought or tilt generated in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was simply at the level of a non-voluntary scruple, which is not included under sin. Then, by acting against this scruple, his rank with Allah Ta'ālā rose much higher.

At this stage, some commentators have also pointed out to another construction of the verse. According to them, the statement: لَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَىٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ (Had he not seen the proof from his Lord) which succeeds is really supposed to precede, in which case, the verse would mean that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام would have also desired her had he not seen the proof from his Lord - but, because he had seen the proof from his Lord, he remained safe from this 'hamm' or thought. Thematically, this too is correct. But, some other commentators have declared this construction as contrary to the rules of the Arabic grammar. Thus, considering this aspect, the first Tafsīr is weightier as it makes the Taqwā and chastity of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام rise to much higher levels since he, despite the human instinct, managed to stay safe from sin.

As for the statement: لَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَىٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ (Had he not seen the proof from his Lord) at the end, its principal clause is understood and it means: Had he not seen the proof from his Lord, he would have remained indulged in that thought, but after having seen the proof from his Lord, that non-voluntary thought and scruple too was eliminated from his

heart.

The Holy Qur'ān does not clarify as to what was that 'burhān' or proof from his Lord which appeared before him. Therefore, statements of commentators differ in this matter. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رَحِمَهُمُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى, Mujāhid, Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رَحِمَهُمُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى and others have said that Allah Ta'ālā made the face of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام appear miraculously before him in that private quarter showing him with his finger in his mouth and warning him. Some commentators say that it was the face of the 'Azīz of Miṣr which was presented before him. Some others have said: When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام looked towards the ceiling, he saw the following verse of the Qur'ān written there: لَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّوْجَىٰ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا that is, do not go (even) near adultery because it is a grave act of immodesty and a very evil way (for human society). Some other commentators have said that Zulaikhā had an idol in her house. When she threw a curtain on this idol, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام asked the reason for it. She said: This is my object of worship. I cannot dare commit sin before it. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام said: My Rabb, the object of my worship certainly deserves that far more modesty be shown before Him for no curtain can stop His seeing. Finally, there are commentators who have said that the station of the prophet he was on and the knowledge of the Divine he had was itself the proof from his Lord.

After reporting all these sayings, what has been said by the Imām of Tafsīr, Ibn Jarīr, has been adjudged authoritatively as most-favoured and doubt-free. And he has said: As much as the Holy Qur'ān has to tell should be what has to be considered sufficient. In other words, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام saw something which made the scruple in his heart go away. To determine this precisely, there could be all those probabilities mentioned by the commentators - but, none of these can be held as certain absolutely. (Ibn Kathīr)

At the end of the verse it was said: كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ (This We did to turn away from him evil and lewdness). Here, the word: السُّوء (as-sū' : evil) means minor sin (Saghīrah) and: الْفَحْشَاء (al-fahshā' : lewdness) means major sin (Kabīrah). (Maḥzarī)

Noteworthy here is that the text mentions 'turning away evil and lewdness from Sayyidnā Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام - and not 'Sayyidnā Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام from

evil and lewdness.' The hint implied here is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) was, because of his great station of prophethood, already removed from this sin as far as he was personally concerned, but evil and immodesty had encircled him. So Allah broke that trap apart. These words of the Holy Qur'ān are also a testimony proving that Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) did not succumb to even the minor-most sin and the thought which went across his heart was not included under sin, otherwise the relevant expression would have been: 'We saved Yūsuf from sin' - and not: 'Turn away from him evil and lewdness.'

Said in the last sentence is: إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ (Surely, he is among Our chosen slaves). The word: مُخْلَصِينَ (*mukhlaṣīn*) is the plural of *mukhlaṣ* which means chosen. It means that Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) is among the chosen servants of Allah who has been appointed to the mission of prophethood to work for the betterment of the creation of Allah. Such people have Allah's own security shield around them so that they would not fall a victim to any evil. The Shayṭān has himself admitted that he cannot touch the chosen servants of Allah. He said: فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغَوِّيَهُمْ مُخْلِصِينَ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ That is, by Your honour and power, I shall put all those humans on the wrong track, except Your servants, the ones chosen by You - 15:40.

In some readings (Qira'āt), this word has appeared as: مُخْلِصِينَ (*mukhliṣīn*) as well. Mukhliṣ means a person who obeys and worships Allah with Ikhlāṣ (for which there is no word in English. The nearest is sincerity which must be genuine, unalloyed, pure and totally honest). Ikhlāṣ means that, in this obedience to Allah and in this worship of Him, there should be no intrusion of worldly or personal desires, interests, love of recognition and office and things like that. If so, the verse would mean: Whoever is *mukhliṣ* (absolutely sincere) in his 'Amal (deed) and 'Ibādah (worship), Allah Ta'ālā will help him in remaining safe from sins.

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has chosen to use two words: سُوءَ (*sū'*) and: فَحْشَاءَ (*fahshā'*). Literally, *sū'* means evil and it refers to minor (*saghīrah*) sins. And *fahshā'* means lewdness or immodesty and refers to major (*kabīrah*) sins. This tells us that Allah Ta'ālā kept Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) protected from both kinds of sins, *saghīrah* and *kabīrah*.

Also clarified here is that the 'hamm' or thought attributed to Sayyid-

nā Yūsuf عليه السلام in the Qur'an was simply a 'hamm' or thought at the level of non-voluntary scruple, which is included neither under Kabīrah sin, nor under Saghirah - in fact, is excused.

Verses 25 - 29

وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصَهُ مِنْ دُبُرٍ وَأَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَا الْبَابِ ط
قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوءًا إِلَّا أَنْ يُسْجَنَ أَوْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ
﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدْتَنِي عَنْ نَفْسِي وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا ؕ إِنْ كَانَ
قَمِيصُهُ قُدَّ مِنْ قُبُلٍ فَصَدَقَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكَذَّابِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَإِنْ كَانَ
قَمِيصُهُ قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَلَمَّا رَأَى قَمِيصَهُ
قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ قَالَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ ؕ إِنْ كَيْدُكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ يُوسُفُ
أَعْرَضَ عَنْ هَٰذَا ۖ وَاسْتَغْفِرَ لِذَنْبِكَ ؕ إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ
﴿٢٩﴾

And they raced towards the door, and she tore his shirt from behind, and they found her master by the door. She said, "What can be the punishment of the one who intended evil with your wife except that he be imprisoned or (given) a painful chastisement?" [25] He said, "It was she who sought to seduce me." And a witness from her family observed that if his shirt was torn up from the frontside, then she is true and he is a liar; [26] and if his shirt was torn up from behind, then she is telling a lie and he is truthful. [27]

So, when he saw his shirt torn up from behind, he said, "This is certainly a guile of yours, O women. Great is the guile of you women indeed. [28] O Yūsuf, ignore this matter, and you (O woman) seek forgiveness for your sin. Surely, you were of the sinners." [29]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses was the time when the wife of the Azīz of Miṣr was busy enticing Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into sin, and he, on his part, was trying to stay away from it. But, there was the natural

struggle with that non-voluntary thought too. So, to help his honourable prophet, Allah Ta'ālā showed a miracle, made something appear before him which drove even that thought out from his heart - whether that 'thing' be the face of his father, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام), or some verse out of the Divine revelation.

Told in the present verse (25) is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام), once he saw this 'proof from his Lord,' ran away from that private enclave and dashed for the door to get out from there. The wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr ran after him to hold him back and, by grabbing his shirt, she tried to stop him from getting out. But, when he did not stop - being determined not to - the shirt was torn from behind him. However, Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) did come out of the door, and so did Zulaikhā behind him. Historical accounts mention that the door was locked from the inside. When Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) ran and reached the door, this lock opened up by itself and dropped down.

When they both came out of the door, they saw the 'Azīz of Miṣr standing face to face. His wife was unnerved. In order to wriggle out of the awkward situation, and to put the blame on Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام), she said: What can be the punishment of the one who intended evil with your wife except that he be imprisoned, or (given) a painful chastisement?

Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام), because of his prophetic gentleness, may not have, perhaps, disclosed her secret. But, when she took the first step and presented a charge sheet of false accusation against him, he was compelled to tell the truth: هِيَ رَاوَدَتْنِي عَنْ نَفْسِي (It was she who sought to seduce me).

The matter was dense and delicate. For the 'Azīz of Miṣr, it was difficult to decide as to who should be taken as being true. That was no occasion for evidence and proof. But, Allah, great is whose majesty, has His own ways of saving His honourable servants from sin and keeping them unaffected and protected from it. He would do the same for them during their worldly life when He would arrange to save them from being disgraced, even if it would take a miracle to do that. Usually, on such occasions, infant children have been chosen to unfold truth, infants who are not expected to talk customarily. But, by giving them power of speech mi-

raculously, Allah Ta'ālā would arrange for the acquittal of His favoured servants from accusations levelled against them. This happened when people started accusing Sayyidah Maryam falsely. Allah Ta'ālā gave a day old infant, Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ, the ability to speak and it was through his tongue that He had the sanctity of his blessed mother manifested - a very special manifestation of His power indeed. Similarly, when another accusation of this nature was made under the umbrella of a major conspiracy against Jurayj, a pious elder among the Banī Isrā'īl, it was a new-born child who testified to his innocence. When Pharaoh got suspicious about Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ, the small daughter of the personal lady hair-styler of the wife of the Pharaoh was given the power of speech and it was she who saved Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ during his childhood from being hurt by the Pharaoh.

Similarly, in this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, according to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Abū Hurairah ؓ, Allah Ta'ālā bestowed that power of speech upon a small child - and that too in one of the finest ways of wisdom. This small child was lying in a cradle in this house. There was no way it could have occurred to anyone that this child would have watched their movements and understood what they were doing - and then, would be able to even go on to describe it in some manner. But, Allah is absolutely powerful. When He decides to highlight the greatness of those who strive in the mission of their obedience to Him, He is quite capable of demonstrating before the whole world that every particle of this universe works as His secret service which knows every criminal inside out and keeps a record of his or her crime and when the time comes, it speaks out the truth. Think of the Resurrection, the awesome plain of the Ḥaṣhr when, at the time of the accounting of deeds, human beings will, goaded by their old worldly habit, refuse to admit their crimes, then, their very hands and feet and skins and surroundings will be called upon to stand as witnesses against them. Each such witness shall lay each and everything done by them bare before the unimaginably huge multitude gathered together on that fateful day of Al-Maḥshar. That would be the time when human beings will find out that their hands and feet and the walls and doors of their homes inside, and the security arrangement outside these, none of them, not even one, were their own. In fact, all of them were secret agents of Al-

lah, the Rabb of all Power.

In sum, this small child, who was lying in the cradle oblivious of everything in the world around him, was made to speak out - as a miracle of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام - precisely at the time when the 'Azīz of Miṣr, being on the horns of a dilemma, did not know what to do.

Furthermore, if this child could have only said that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is free of any blame and it is Zulaikhā who is at fault, then, even that much would have been no less than a miracle, and a formidable proof of the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. But, Allah Ta'ālā had this child say something farsighted which would separate truth from falsehood decisively. What the child said was: See the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. If it is torn up from the front, then the word of Zulaikhā is true and that of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام could be otherwise. And if the shirt is torn up from the back, then there remains just no other probability but that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was running away from her and Zulaikhā wanted to stop him.

Apart from being a miracle of speech manifested by a child, this was something which could be understood by everyone around on its own. So, when the direction was followed, it was observed that the shirt was torn up from the back. Thus, the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام stood proved openly from physical signs as well.

The explanation of the '*shāhid*' or witness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام given here - that he was a small child blessed with the power of speech as a miracle - stands proved from a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This Ḥadīth has been reported by Imām Aḥmad in his Musnad, Ibn Ḥibbān in his Ṣaḥīḥ and Ḥākim in Mustadrak. They have rated this Ḥadīth as Ṣaḥīḥ (sound). In this Ḥadīth, it is said: 'Allah Ta'ālā has blessed four children the power of speech while still in their cradle.' These four are the same as mentioned earlier. (Maḥzarī) However, in some narrations, other explanations of '*shāhid*' or witness have also been reported. But, Tafsīr authorities such as Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr and others have declared the first Tafsīr to be the weightier one.

Injunctions and Rulings

The following rules and guiding principles have been deduced from the verses cited above:

1. From verse 25 beginning with the words: **وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ** (And they raced towards the door ...), we learn that a place where there is a danger of getting involved in sin must be abandoned outright - as was practically demonstrated by Sayyidnā Yūsuf **عليه السلام** by running away from there.

2. In matters requiring obedience to Divine injunctions, one should not, to the best of one's ability, let his efforts in that direction taper off - even if a tangible result from them does not seem to be coming out. Results rest in the hands of Allah Ta'ālā. One's job is to channel and devote his or her effort and ability in the way of Allah - and proving one's identity as a servant of Allah is the purpose. This is what was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf **عليه السلام**. All doors were closed, even locked, as reported in historical narrations. Yet, he spent out his maximum strength in running towards the door. In a situation like that, help and support from Allah *jalla thana'uh* is witnessed frequently when a servant of Allah has done his best, it transpires that He would also arrange the causes for His servant to succeed. However, should the situation be otherwise and one fails to achieve formal success as we know it, then, for a devoted servant of Allah, even this failure is no less than success (for this is the preference of his Lord).

It is said about a righteous elder confined to prison that he would, on every Friday take his bath, wash his clothes, get ready for Jumu'ah prayer, walk upto the door of the prison, and once there, he would say: 'Yā Allah, this much was what was within my power. What is beyond that is in Your control.' Who knows, given the limitless mercy of Allah Ta'ālā, his spiritual yearning would have caused the prison gate to open with the command of Allah and he would have been enabled to perform the Ṣalāh of Jumu'ah. But, Allah, in His wisdom, bestowed upon this righteous devotee such high spiritual station as would pale out a thousand workings of the supernatural (*karāmah*). The gate of the prison did not open because of his continuous effort to offer his Ṣalāh of Jumu'ah. But, he did not lose heart. He kept doing the same thing every Jumu'ah. This is spiritual fortitude called by Ṣūfī masters as superior to Karamah.

3. It stands proved (from verse 26) that, should a person be accused falsely by someone, speaking out in defence is the way of the prophets (the Sunnah of the Anbiyā'). Remaining silent at that time, and letting oneself be declared to be a criminal, is no act of piety or trust in Allah

(*tawakkul*).

4. The fourth problem concerns the word: شاهد (*shāhid*) (in verse 26). When this word is used in common juristic matters and cases, it denotes a person who relates an event as seen by him in a disputed case. In this verse, the person who has been referred to by the word, 'shāhid,' has not related any event, or any personal observation about it - instead of that, what has been hinted at is a sort of device to arrive at a decision. Technically, that could not be called a 'shāhid' or witness.

But, it is obvious that all these terms have been employed by later scholars and jurists for the convenience of understanding and teaching. They are neither the terms of the Holy Qur'ān, nor is it bound by them. The Holy Qur'ān has called this person a 'shāhid' (witness) in the sense that the way the statement of a 'witness makes it easy for a judge to arrive at a decision, and proves that one of the parties in the case is in the right, the same benefit became available through the statement of this child. Initially, his miraculous speech itself was sufficient proof to absolve Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame. Then, there were the signs given by him. In the ultimate analysis, they too are nothing but the proof of the absolvment of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame. Therefore, saying that he appeared as a witness in favour of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام will be correct - though, he did not declare Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to be true, rather, had mentioned both probabilities. And, in addition to that, he had even supposedly taken Zulaikhā to be true in a situation in which the likelihood of her being true was not certain - in fact, there existed the other probability too, because the possibility of the shirt being torn from the front existed in both situations. And then, he had admitted the truthfulness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام only in a situation wherein there could have been no other probability other than this. But, finally, the outcome of this strategy was but to prove the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

5. In arriving at judgements of disputed cases, circumstantial evidence can be taken into consideration - as was demonstrated here when this 'shāhid' declared that the shirt torn from the backside was an evidence that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was running and Zulaikhā was trying to stop him. In this matter, there is an agreement of all jurists that signs and indicators should definitely be used to determine the truth, as was

done here. But, besides that, only signs and indicators cannot be given the status of sufficient proof. In this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام too, that which really proves the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is the miraculous speech of the child. As for the signs and indicators which have been mentioned there, they serve to confirm the matter.

In the last two (28 & 29) of the verses cited above, it has been stated that the 'Azīz of Miṣr had already realized by having heard the child speak in the manner he did that some special supernatural situation was there to demonstrate the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. After that, according to what the child had said, when he saw that the very shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is really torn up from the back, he became certain that it was Zulaikhā who was at fault and it was Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who was innocent. So, first he addressed Zulaikhā and said: إِنَّهُ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ that is, all this is a guile of yours whereby you wish to pass on your wrongdoing to someone else. Then he said that great is the guile of women for it is difficult to understand and not easy to get out from. The reason is that they outwardly give the impression of being soft, delicate, even weak. A non-discerning onlooker is likely to believe in what they say. But, given a lack of wisdom and honesty, that could be a web of deception. (Maẓharī)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه appearing in the Tafsīr of Al-Qurtubī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: The guile of women is stronger than the guile of Shayṭān - because, about the guile of the Shayṭān, Allah Ta'ālā has said that it is weak: إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا (4:76); and about the guile of women, it was said: إِنَّ كَيْدَ نِسَاءٍ عَظِيمٌ (great is the guile of you women - 12:28). And it is obvious that not all women are meant here. Instead, meant here are only those of them who are involved in practicing guiles and excuses. So, after having pointed out to Zulaikhā her error, the 'Azīz of Miṣr said to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: 'يُوسُفُ اعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا: O Yūsuf, ignore this matter' - that is, do not speak about it before others so there be no disgrace because of this. Then he addressed Zulaikhā and said: وَاسْتَغْفِرِي لِذَنْبِكِ إِنَّكَ كُنتِ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ (and you [O woman] seek forgiveness for your sin. Surely, you were of the sinners). This obviously means that she should seek forgiveness from her husband. And it could also mean that she should seek forgiveness from Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for it was she who made the error and put the blame on

him.

Special Note

At this point, it is very surprising that a husband, who finds out an open proof of such immodesty and breach of trust on the part of his wife, would not be agitated, rather, go on talking with perfect peace of mind - unusual indeed, given the compulsion of human nature in such circumstances. Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said that one of the reasons for this may be that the ‘Azīz of Miṣr was someone lacking that kind of a sense of shame. And it is also possible that the way Allah Ta‘ālā supernaturally arranged to save Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ first from sin and then from disgrace - in the same way, it was also a part of this arrangement that He did not let the ‘Azīz of Miṣr become all agitated in anger. Otherwise, as customary, this would have been an occasion where one is likely to go to physical assault without bothering to investigate first, not to say much about verbal aggression, which would be rather elementary. If the ‘Azīz of Miṣr, affected by common human response, were to be enraged, it is possible that he might have committed something, physically or verbally, something which would have been against the august status of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ. These are the wonders of Divine Power which openly prove how those who stand steadfast in obedience to their most true Lord are protected at every step they take in His way. And the honour of creating what is there at its best goes only to Allah.

In the verses which will follow, mentioned there is another event which is connected with the story narrated earlier. There it has been said that this event, despite the effort to keep it concealed, spread around among women in the families of the courtiers. These women started blaming the wife of the ‘Azīz of Miṣr. Some commentators have said that these were five women, all wives of officials close to the “‘Azīz of Miṣr. (Qurṭubī, Maḏharī)

These women were talking among themselves. They were saying: Look, how regrettable it is that the wife of the ‘Azīz of Miṣr, despite enjoying a status so high, had become enamoured with her young slave and was looking for the fulfillment of what she wanted from him. In this, we think, she is in a grave error. The word used in the verse (30) is: فَتَاهَا (*fatāhā*: translated as ‘her youthful slave’). *Fatā’* denotes someone youthful. In customary usage, a boy slave when small is called a *ghulām*. If in his

youth, the boy is called *fatā*, and the girl, *fatāh*. Here, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been referred to as the slave of Zulaikhā either because that which is owned by the husband is also customarily called as that which is owned by the wife; and/or because Zulaikhā had taken Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from her husband as gift. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 30 - 35

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتَاهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ۖ قَدْ شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا ۗ إِنَّا لَنَرَاهَا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَكًا وَآتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا وَقَالَتُ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ ۖ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا ۖ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالَتْ فَذَلِكُنَّ الَّذِي لُمْتُنَّنِي فِيهِ ۖ وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ ۖ وَلَئِنْ لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَا امْرَأُهُ يُسْجَنَ ۖ وَلَيْكُونَا مِنَ الصَّغِيرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُنْ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ۖ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٣٤﴾ ثُمَّ بَدَأَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوْا الْآيَاتِ لَيْسَجْنَهُ ۖ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٥﴾

And women in the city said, "The wife of the governor is seducing her youthful slave. The love for him has arrested her. Surely, we see her in open error." [30] So, when she heard of their crafty comments, she extended an invitation to them and arranged for them a comfortable place (to sit and dine) and gave everyone a knife and said (to Yūsuf): "come in before them." So when they saw him, they found him great and (were so bewildered that they) cut their hands and said, "Oh God! He is no human being. He is but a noble angel." [31] She said, "This is he you blamed me for. Yes, I seduced him, but he abstained. And should he not follow my command, he shall be imprisoned and will be disgraced." [32] He said,

"My Lord, the prison is dearer to me than what these women invite me to. And unless You do not turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them and shall be among the ignorant." [33] So, his Lord accepted his prayer and turned their guile away from him. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [34] Later on, even after having seen the signs, they deemed it proper to imprison him for a time. [35]

Commentary

Having explained the linkage of verse before the beginning of the present verses, we can now turn to the explanation of individual verses.

Said in verse 32 was: فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ (So, when she heard of their crafty comments, she extended an invitation to them).

Here, Zulaikhā refers to the talking of women as their '*makr*' or craftiness - though they had obviously planned no trick against her. But, since they spoke ill about her secretly, it was identified as '*makr*.' As for the expression: وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مَتَكًا which follows immediately and has been translated as 'and arranged for them a comfortable place' is inclusive of the comfort of special pillows for hand and back rest placed there for relaxation.

Then, it was said: وَأَنْتَ كُلُّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا (and gave everyone a knife). It means when these women came in and sat down, different foods and fruits were served, some of which needed a knife to peel and cut, therefore, also given to each one of them was a sharp knife. The obvious purpose of this was to cut fruits. But, concealed in her heart was what comes next - that is, these women will lose their senses at the sight of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) and would go on to cut their hands with the knife.

After having made all these arrangements, to Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام), who was in some other quarter of the house, Zulaikhā said: وَقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْنَهُ (come in before them). Since, Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) was not aware of her vain intention, he came out into this sitting.

That which happened then has been described in:

فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ، وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ

'So, when they saw him, they found him great and [were so

bewildered that they] cut their hands [that is, when cutting their fruit, they saw this object of wonder, the knife unconsciously ran over their hand - as it occasionally happens when one's thought is diverted to something else] and said, 'Oh God! He is no human being. He is but a noble angel.' [by which they meant that one exuding such light can only be an angel].'

Then, in verse 32, it was said:

قَالَتْ فَذَلِكُنَّ الَّذِي لُمْتُنَّنِي فِيهِ ط وَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ ط وَلَئِنْ لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَا
أَمْرُهُ لَيَسْجُنَنَّ وَلَيَكُونَا مِنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ

'She [Zulaikhā] said: 'So, [see] this is the one you blamed me for. Yes, I seduced him, but he abstained. And should he [in future] not follow my command, he shall be [surely] imprisoned and shall be disgraced [too].'

When Zulaikhā realized that her secret lay disclosed before those women anyway, she started threatening Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام right before them. At that time, according to some commentators, all these women too started telling Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that Zulaikhā was their benefactor, therefore, he should not oppose her.

And some words of the Holy Qur'ān which appear later (33) also support it, for example: *يَدْعُونَنِي* (*yad'unani*: these women invite me) and: *كَيْدَهُنَّ* (*kaidahunna*: their guile) where the statement of some women has been mentioned in the plural form.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام saw that these women were also supporting Zulaikhā and there remained no other visible way to stay safe against their guile, he turned to his ultimate resort, to Allah *jalla thana'uh*, and before Him, he said:

رَبِّ السِّجْنِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ ط وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ
وَأَكُنَّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

My Lord, the prison is dearer to me than what these women invite me to. And unless You turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them and shall be among the ignorant.

Here, the statement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that 'the prison is dearer to me' does not reflect any desire or wish to be detained in a prison, instead of that, it is an expression which shows that he would find it easier

to face this temporal hardship as compared to that of falling in sin. According to some narrations, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was confined to the prison, a revelation from Allah Ta'ālā told him: You have put yourself into the prison by what you yourself had said: *السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ* (the prison is dearer to me) and had you asked for well-being ('*āfiyah*), you would have been blessed with perfect well-being. From here we come to know that, to stay safe from a major hardship, saying in prayer that one better be subjected to some minor hardship in lieu of it is not appropriate. Instead of doing that, one should, when under the threat of any hardship, problem or distress, pray to Allah Ta'ālā for nothing but '*āfiyah* (well-being). Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prohibited a man from praying for *ṣabr* (patience) saying that *ṣabr* is done when one faces distress and hardship. So, rather praying to Allah for *ṣabr*, pray for '*āfiyah*. (Tirmidhī) The uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضي الله عنه asked him: Teach me a prayer I should make. He said: Pray for '*āfiyah* (well-being) from your Rabb. Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضي الله عنه says when he, after a period of time, once again asked him to be advised of some *du'ā'* he should be making, he said: Pray to Allah Ta'ālā for '*āfiyah* in *dunyā* and '*ākhirah*. (Maḥzarī from Ṭabarānī)

As for the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: 'And unless you do not turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them,' this is not contrary to the concept of the 'Ismah of prophethood (a prophet's state of being Divinely protected from sin) - because the very outcome of 'Ismah is that Allah Ta'ālā would, by arranging to keep a person safe from sin as a creational imperative, protect him from falling into it. Though Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had this desired cover by virtue of his being a prophet, yet he was compelled to make this *du'ā'* because of the great awe he had for Him in his heart. This also tells us that no one can, without the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā, stay safe from sin. And it also makes it clear that every act of sin is caused by ignorance (*jahālah*), the opposite of which is knowledge (*ilm*), and 'Ilm (knowledge) demands abstention from sins. (Qurṭubī)

After that, said in verse 34 was:

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ، فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

So, his Lord accepted his prayer and turned their guile away

from him. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

To protect him from the guile of these women, Allah Ta'ālā made his own wise arrangements. Though the 'Azīz of Miṣr and his inner circle was already convinced of the great spiritual qualities of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام), his piety, fear of Allah and chastity, but rumours of the incident had started circulating in the city. To put a check on this, they found it expedient to confine Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) into the prison for a certain period of time so that there remains no source of any doubt in the concerned family, and that the talk of the town too dies out in due course. So, said at the end of the verse (35) was:

ثُمَّ بَدَأَ لَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوُا الْآيَاتِ لَيْسَجْنُهُ، حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ

Later on, even after having seen the signs, they [the 'Azīz of Miṣr and his advisers] deemed it proper [or expedient] to imprison him for a time.

Thus, to the prison he was sent.

Verses 36 - 42

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيْنِ ۖ قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا ۚ
وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ رَأْسِي خُبْرًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ ۖ
نَبْنِئَا بِنَاوِيلَهُ ۚ إِنَّا نَرْبُكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ
تُرْزَقُنِيهِ إِلَّا بِنَائِكُمَا بِنَاوِيلِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا ۚ ذَلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي ۖ
إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾
وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۖ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نُشْرِكَ
بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۖ ذَلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ
النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ يَصَاحِبِي السِّجْنَ ۚ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ مَثَقَرُ قَوْمٍ خَيْرٌ أَمْ
اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٣٩﴾ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءَ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا
أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مِمَّا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ ۖ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۖ أَمَرَ

لَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾
 يُصَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَمَّا أَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِي رَبَّهُ خَمْرًا ۖ وَأَمَّا الْآخَرُ
 فَيُصَلِّبُ فَنَآكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْ رَأْسِهِ ۚ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِينَ
 ۚ ﴿٤١﴾ وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ نَاجٍ مِّنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِي عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ۚ فَأَنسَاهُ
 الشَّيْطَانُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهِ فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِينَ ۚ ﴿٤٢﴾

And two men entered the prison with him. One of them said, "I have seen myself (in dream) pressing wine." And the other said, "I have seen myself carrying bread on my head of which the birds are eating. Let us know its interpretation. We see you are a man of good deeds." [36]

He said, "No food provided for you shall come to you, but I can give you its description before it comes to you. This is the knowledge my Lord has given me. I have abandoned the way of those who do not believe in Allah, and who are deniers of the Hereafter, [37] and I have followed the way of my fathers, Ibrāhīm, Ishāq and Ya'qūb. It is not for us that we associate any partners with Allah. All this is of the favour of Allah upon us and upon the people, but most of the people are not grateful. [38] O my fellow prisoners, are different gods better or Allah, the One, the All-Dominant? [39] Whatever you worship, other than Him, are nothing but names you have coined, you and your fathers. Allah has sent down no authority for them. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. He has ordained that you shall not worship anyone but Him. This is the only right path. But most of the people do not know." [40]

O my fellow prisoners, one of you will serve wine to his master, while the other will be crucified and birds will eat from his head. Destined is the matter you are asking about." [41]

And he (Yūsuf) said to the one whom he believed likely to be released out of the two, "Mention me before your master.' Then, the Satan made him forget to mention him to his master. So, he (Yūsuf) remained in prison for a few years. [42]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses cited above is a supplementary event relating to the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. It has been repeatedly stressed that the Holy Qur'ān is no book of history, or of stories and tales. When a story or historical event is mentioned in it, the sole objective is to provide some lesson, good counsel or crucial guidance on various facets of human life. In the entire Qur'ān and throughout the events relating to many prophets, it is the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام alone which has been described by the Qur'ān continuously - otherwise, it has considered it sufficient to mention some necessary part of an historical event wherever appropriate.

If you would look at the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the beginning to the end, there are hundreds of lessons to learn, good advices to heed to and important elements of guidance to follow during various stages of human life. This supplementary story too has its graces of guidance in abundance.

The event as it took shape was that, despite the complete absolve-ment of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame, and the strong establishment of his moral integrity, it was to put an end to the disgrace of people talking about them that the 'Azīz of Miṣr and his wife decided to send Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to the prison for some time - which, in reality, was the fulfillment of the *du'a*' and wish of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, because, for him, it had become extremely difficult to defend his chastity while living in the home of the 'Azīz of Miṣr.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام arrived at the prison, two other sentenced criminals were also admitted there. One of them was the cup-bearer of the king while the other was a cook. Citing major Tafsīr authorities, Ibn Kathīr has written that these two were arrested on the charge that they had tried to poison the king through food or drink. The case was under investigation, therefore, they were kept in prison.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام came into the prison, it was because of his prophetic morals, mercy and affection that he used to show concern about all of his fellow inmates and took care of them whenever needed. If anyone became sick, he would call on him and do whatever had to be done for him. For anyone he found sad or distressed, he would have ap-

propriate words of comfort. To lift his spirits, he would gently tell him to observe patience and made the hope of freedom come alive into his heart. He would think of bringing comfort to others at the cost of his own discomfort. For whole nights he would remain engaged in the 'Ibādah (worship) of Allah Ta'ālā. Seeing his endearing ways, all inmates of the prison became convinced of his high spiritual status. Even the officer-in-charge of the prison was impressed. He said: Had it been in my power, I would have let you go. Now, this much I can do that you will face no inconvenience here.

Some Notes to Wonder About

When the officer-in-charge of the prison, or some of the inmates, told Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ that they loved him very much, he said: For God's sake, do not love me - because whenever I have been loved by anyone, I have suffered one way or the other. When I was a child, my paternal aunt loved me. As a result, I was blamed for theft. Then, my father loved me. This made me do a term of detention in a well at the hands of my brothers, then came slavery and expulsion from home country. When the wife of the 'Azīz loved me, I landed into this prison. (Ibn Kathīr, Maḥzarī)

These two prisoners who went to the prison alongwith Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ said to him one day that they thought he was a man of piety and good deeds, therefore, they would like to ask him to give an interpretation of their dream. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ and some other leading authorities in Tafsīr have said that they had really seen these dreams. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ has said that there was no dream. They had simply made it up to test the spiritual excellence and veracity of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ.

However, one of them, that is, the royal cup-bearer, said: 'I have seen myself (in dream) pressing wine,' and the other, that is, the cook, said: 'I have seen myself carrying bread on my head of which the birds are eating.' Then, they requested him to interpret the dreams for them.

Here, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ has been requested to interpret the dreams. But he, before answering this question, and following his intrinsic prophetic way, begins with the task of Tablīgh and invitation to believe and have faith. And by following the principle of Da'wah and by acting wisely, he first tried to create in their hearts a base of confidence in

him. To achieve this, he talked about his particular miracle through which he tells them about the food which they receive from their homes, or from somewhere else, and much before it arrives, he is able to tell them the kind, the taste, the quantity and the time of arrival of the food - and that the food turns out to be exactly as predicted: *ذَلِكَ مَا عَلَّمَنِی رَبِّی* (This is of the knowledge my Lord has given me). He is saying that this has nothing to do with the art of divination through computation of figures and lines (*‘ilm al-jafra* and *‘ilm al-raml* - not Jafar and Ramal, soothsaying or any other occult act of conjuring). Instead of all that, this is what my Rabb tells me - and I pass on the information. And this was an open miracle which is proof positive of prophethood and a major cause of confidence. After that, he declares his abhorrence for disbelief and his disengagement from the community of disbelievers. Then, with it, he also stresses that he is a member of the House of Prophets and it is their Community that he adheres to and that he is a scion of the House of Ibrāhīm, Ishāq and Ya‘qūb عليه السلام. We mentioned confidence a little earlier. Customarily, this kind of inherited nobility, a common family trait, is also a source of creating confidence in a person. After that he said: And it is not for us that we associate any partners with Allah. Then, he said that the Taufiq of following a true religion (‘the favour of Allah upon us and upon all people’) was nothing but the Faḍl or grace of Allah Ta‘ālā, for it was He who, by giving proper understanding, made the acceptance of truth easy on us. But, most of the people do not appreciate this blessing and do not show their gratitude for it. After having said that, he asked the same prisoners to tell him if it was better that human beings should be worshiping many gods, or was it better that one becomes a servant of one Allah alone - whose subduing power is all-dominant. Then he referred to idol worship from a different angle. He told them that their fathers and forefathers have taken some idols as their Lord. As for them, they are no more than a lot of names which they have coined on their own. They have no personal attributes which could become deserving of assigning to them the least fund of power - because all of them are inert. This is something one can see with one’s own eyes. The only other method through which they could have been taken as true objects of worship would be that Allah Ta‘ālā sends down specific injunctions or commandments to worship them. So, in that case, even if observation and reason had not been willing to accept their godhood but, because of the Divine

command, we would have left our observation and reason aside and would have obeyed the command of Allah. But, this is not there either - because Allah Ta'ālā did not send down any argument or proof for their worship. Instead of that, what He said was but that Law and Sovereignty belonged to Allah Ta'ālā with no one having a right in it; and the command He gave was no other but that we should not worship anyone or anything other than Allah. Finally, he said: 'This is the only right path - which was bestowed on my forefathers by Allah Ta'ālā, but most of the people do not know this reality.'

After having made his call to truth, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام turned to the dreams mentioned by two of his prison mates declaring that one of the two of them will get his release, return to his job and keep serving wine to his master. As for the other, the crime against him will stand proved and he will be crucified and birds will eat from his head.

An Example of Prophetic Compassion

Ibn Kathīr has said: Though the dreams of both these prisoners were separate, and fixed was the interpretation of each, and also fixed was the fate that the royal cup-bearer will be acquitted and return to his job and the cook will be crucified. But, because of his prophetic compassion and clemency, he did not specifically mention as to who among the two will be hanged so that the person concerned may be spared from becoming obsessed by the very thought of it right from that time. Instead of that, he made a general statement saying that one of them will be released and the other will be crucified.

At the end, he told them that the interpretation of their dreams given by him was not arrived at by conjecture. It was Divine decree which cannot be averted. Commentators who have called the dreams described by these people as false and made-up, they have also said: When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interpreted their dreams, they came up with the remark that they had just not seen any dream. They had simply made it up. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِينَ (Destined is the matter you are asking about). In other words, it would mean: Whether you saw this dream, or did not, now the event will come to be as described - the purpose of which is that this is the punishment of the sin, of making up a false dream, committed by you, a punishment which has been identified in the interpretation of the dream.

After that, to the person about whom Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had gathered from the interpretation of his dream that he would be released, he said: When you are released from the prison, mention me before your master as the innocent person who is still languishing in the prison. But, once released, this person forgot about this message of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, as a result of which, his freedom was further delayed and he had to stay in prison for a few more years. The word used in the Qur'ān is: بضْعَ سِنِينَ (*bid'a sinīn*: a few years). This word holds good for a figure between three to nine. Some commentators have said that he had to live in the prison for a period of seven more years.

Injunctions and Rulings

Worth pondering on are many Aḥkāṁ, Masā'il, useful lessons and elements of guidance that emerge from the verses under reference. They are as given below:

1. Consider the confinement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into a prison which is the notorious turf of criminals and bad characters. But, he treated them too with his characteristic good morals and social graces, as a result of which, all of them became enamoured with him. This tells us that it is the duty of reformers that they should, by dealing with sinners and criminals with compassion and concern, bring them closer, let them become familiar, connected, and reliant on them. Also necessary is that they should not betray any attitude of hatred or distaste for them at any step.

2. From the statement: إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (We see you are a man of good deeds), we find out that the interpretation of a dream should be sought particularly from persons one trusts in as righteous, good in deeds and sympathetic.

3. The third thing we learn here is about the ideal conduct of those who carry the *da'wah* of truth and serve people by working for their moral and social betterment. In this connection, their first duty is to bring round people created by Allah to put their trust in them through their good morals and conduct, and their intellectual and practical excellences - whether they have to unfold and express some of those excellences, as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام on this occasion when he not only talked about his miracle but also mentioned his being a member of

the House of Prophets. Such a statement of personal excellence - if it is based on the intention to serve people to become better and not to prove one's personal rank - will not be considered as the 'self-praise' which has been prohibited in the Holy Qur'an: فَلَا تُرْكُوا انْفُسَكُمْ that is, do not talk about the purity of your own self. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

4. Pointed to here is an important principle of communication and correction (Tablīgh and Irshād). It is the duty of the carrier of a Call (Dā'ī) and reformer (Muṣliḥ) that he should, at all times and under all circumstances, keep his constant mission of Da'wah and Tablīgh come first of all he does. In other words, if someone comes to him for something, he should not forget his real mission - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام when these prisoners came to him to ask for an interpretation of their dreams. At that time, before answering their request for the interpretation of their dreams, he gave them the gift of right guidance through his Tablīgh and Irshād. Please do not take Da'wah and Tablīgh as something which takes place in a conference, or on a pulpit or stage alone. This job is done far more effectively through personal contacts and private exchanges.

5. Another aspect of this very effort of telling people what is right and seeking their betterment through it (Irshād and Iṣlah) is : Whatever is said in this connection should be said with the strategy of wisdom in a way that it goes into the heart of the addressee. This is how it was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He succeeded in showing to them that the excellences he had were the direct outcome of his disengagement with disbelief and adoption of Islam as his faith. After that he described the drawbacks and shortcomings of Kufr and Shirk in a soft manner which appeals to the heart.

6. Another problem resolved here is about how bad news should be handled. If, that which has to be communicated to an addressee happens to be painful or repugnant, yet it be necessary that it be disclosed, then, it should be presented before the addressee, as far as possible, in a way that it brings the least discomfort to him. This is as it was when the death of one person was destined as interpreted on the basis of his dream, but Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام kept it ambiguous. He did not make it precise and fixed by telling him that he will be the one to be hanged. (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī)

7. It will be recalled that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had sought his release from the prison when he asked the acquitted prisoner: Mention me before your master. This tells us that making someone a medium of effort in order to get out of some difficulty is not against the principle of Tawakul (Trust in Allah).

8. Another view of this problem is that Allah Ta'ālā does not like His great prophets making efforts to achieve everything permissible and go on to make a human being the medium of their release. This is so because the absence of any medium between them and Allah Ta'ālā spells out the true identity of prophets. Perhaps, that was why this prisoner forgot about the message given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which made him stay in the prison for many more years. In a Ḥadīth too, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has pointed out in this direction.

Verses 43 - 50

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ إِنِّي أَرَى سَبْعَ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ
وَسَبْعٌ سُنبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ يَبْسُطُ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي رُءْيَايَ
إِن كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّءْيَا تَعْبُرُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ
الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَلَمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَا
أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ ﴿٤٥﴾ يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ أَفْتِنَا فِي سَبْعِ
بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَسَبْعِ سُنبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ
يَبْسُطُ لَا لَعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَ تَزْرَعُونَ
سَبْعَ سِنِينَ دَابَّاءَ فَمَا حَصَدْتُمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِي سُنبُلِهِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّمَّا
تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ
لَهُنَّ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّمَّا تَحْصِنُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَامٌ فِيهِ
يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيهِ يَعْصِرُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ أَتُوتَنِي بِهِ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ
الرَّسُولُ قَالَ أَرْجِعْ إِلَى رَبِّكَ فَسْأَلْهُ مَا بَالُ النِّسْوَةِ الَّتِي قُطِعَ

أَيَّدِيَهُنَّ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

And the king said, "I have seen (in a dream) seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean ones, and seven ears of grain which are green and (seven) others which are dry. O people, tell me about my dream, if you do interpret dreams." [43] They said, "(It seems to be) a mishmash of dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of dreams." [44]

And said the one who was released out of the two and recalled (Yūsuf) after a long time, "I shall tell you its interpretation. Just send me (to Yūsuf)." [45]

"Yūsuf, O the truthful one, tell us about seven fat cows eaten by seven lean ones, and seven ears of grain which are green and (seven) others which are dry, so that I may go back to the people, that they may know." [46]

He said, "You will grow crops for seven years consecutively. So, what you have harvested, leave it in its ear, except a little which you eat. [47] Then there shall come after that seven hard years which shall eat up what you have stored for them, except a little which you preserve (to sow). [48] Then there shall come after that a year in which people shall have rains and in which they shall extract juices." [49]

And the king said, "Bring him to me." So, when the messenger came to him, he said, "Go back to your lord and ask him, 'What about the women who cut their hands?' Surely, my Lord knows their guile well." [50]

Commentary

After that, say the verses cited above, Allah Ta'ālā created through the workings of what is unseen (Al-Ghayb), a particular way out for the release of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. This made the king of Egypt see a dream which caused him great anxiety. He assembled the known dream interpreters and soothsayers of his state and asked them to interpret his dream. None of them could understand the dream. The answer they all gave was: 'أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعِلْمَيْنِ' : '(It seems to be) a mishmash of dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of dreams.' The word: *أَضْغَاثُ* (*adghāth*) is the plural form of: *ضِفْثٌ* (*dighth*) which literally refers to a bundle of chaff or husk separated from grain while threshing and is a collection of different kinds of waste material. The sense of their say-

ing was that this dream was somewhat muddled, confused and an admixture of many thoughts and things, and they did not know how to interpret such dreams. Had it been a regular dream, they would have had interpreted it.

While watching the proceedings of this event, that released prisoner recollected the message given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, though after the passage of a long time in between. He stepped forward and said that he may be able to tell him the interpretation of this dream. At that time, by mentioning the spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, his expertise in dream interpretation, and his detention in the prison despite his innocence, he submitted that he be allowed to meet him in the prison. The king arranged that for him. He came to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. To describe this entire episode, the Holy Qur'an has used only one word: *فَارْسِلُون* (*fa arsilūn*).

It means: Just send me (to Yūsuf). Things like the introduction of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the official permission to see him and then the final arrival in the prison are parts of the event which can be understood contextually. Therefore, they were not described specifically, instead, the story was initiated as follows.

This begins with the address: *يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ* (Yūsuf, O the truthful one ...) in verse 46. It means that this person reached the prison and described his intent in a manner that he first confessed to the truthfulness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in word and deed, and then requested him to give an interpretation of a dream. The dream he related was: The king has seen that seven fat cows are being eaten by seven lean ones; and he has seen that there are seven ears of grain which are green and seven others which are dry.

After having related the dream, this person said: *لَعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ* (so that I may go back to the people, that they may know). It means: If you tell me the interpretation, it is possible that, when I go back to the people and report the interpretation to them, it is likely that, in this way, they get to know your excellence and expertise.

According to Tafsīr Maḥzarī, the format of events present in the world of autonomous images is what one sees in dreams. In that world, these images have particular meanings. The edifice of the art of inter-

preting dreams solely depends on knowing what a particular autonomous image in that world means. Allah Ta'ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) with perfection in this art. As soon as he heard the dream related, he knew that seven fat cows and seven green ears denote seven years during which crops will grow well as usual - because animal-driven ploughing to level land and grow grain has a distinct role in it. Similarly, seven lean cows and seven dry ears of grain mean that, after the first seven years, there will be seven years of severe famine. As for the seven lean cows eating the seven fat ones, it means that the grain stored during the first seven years will all be eaten up during those years of famine - remaining there will be some grain needed for sowing.

Obviously, the dream of the king had told him only about seven years of good crops followed by seven years of famine. But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) also added to it that, following the year of drought, there will be an year of good rains and crops. Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) came to know about it either because the total number of years of famine were no more than seven whereby, as the customary practice of Allah would have it, the eighth year would be that of rains and crops. According to early commentator, Qatādah, Allah Ta'ālā had Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) know about it through a revelation so that the amount of information they receive could be over and above that which was to be interpreted through the dream - so that the spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) is further enhanced to become the cause of his being released. Then, another factor was added to this. Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) did not consider it sufficient to limit himself to the technical interpretation of the dream only. The fact was that he also gave them a good counsel based on wisdom and fellow-feeling. He advised them to keep the extra produce yielded during the first seven years within the ears of the crop of wheat, so that it may not be affected by bacteria when old. It is borne by experience that grain while in ears is not affected by bacteria.

Said in verse 48 was: **ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ سَبْعَ شِدَادٍ يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ** (Then there shall come, after that, seven hard years which shall eat up what you have stored for them). Since, seen in the dream was that seven lean cows ate up the seven fat ones, therefore, while giving his interpretation of the dream, he considered it appropriate to say that the years of the famine will eat up what they had stored over the past years. Though, an

year is no eatable, the sense is that the people and animals will eat up during the time of famine whatever grain was stored up during past years.

The context of the story shows that this person, after having found out the interpretation of the dream, returned to the king and told him about it. He was pleased with it and convinced of the intellectual and spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. But, the Holy Qur'ān has not considered it necessary to mention all these things because they are self-explanatory. What transpired later was described by saying: **وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ اُتُونِي بِهِ** (And the king said, 'Bring him to me.'). It means that the king gave the order that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام be taken out of the prison and be produced before him in his court. So, some emissary of the king arrived at the prison with the message of the king.

Obviously, this was an occasion which should have been welcomed by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He had been in the prison for a long time, restricted and helpless. He wished to be released. When the message of the king arrived at the prison that he was wanted by the king, he should have welcomed it and got himself ready to go. But, Allah Ta'ālā bestows upon His Messengers a very high moral station which other people just cannot comprehend.

The answer he gave to the emissary of the king was:

قَالَ ارْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَسْأَلْهُ مَا بَالُ النِّسْوَةِ الَّتِي قُطِعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ

'Go back to your lord and ask him, 'What about the women who cut their hands?' Surely, my Lord knows their guile well.'

Here, by asking this question, the objective is to find out if he is still held in doubt about what had happened then and if he is still taken to be at some fault in that matter.

Also noteworthy at this stage is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is, in the present context, talking about the women who had cut their hands - he has not mentioned the wife of the 'Azīz who was the main cause of what had happened. In this conduct of his, there was consideration for the right of his master's house where he lived and where he was brought up, something elementally respected by a person of natural gentleness in him. (Qurṭubī)

Then, not any less important was his real purpose, the need to be exonerated from blame conclusively. If proof was needed, it could have come from those women as well. And it would have not brought much of a disgrace on them. Had they confessed to what was the truth, they would have been, at the most, charged for having given false advice only. This would have been contrary to the case of the wife of the 'Azīz for, if she was made a target of the investigations, it would have proved far more disgraceful for her. And, along with this, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: **إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِمْ عَلِيمٌ** (Surely, my Lord knows their guile well). He said this so that the king too will get to know the truth of the matter - which is a delicate approach to register his innocence in it.

On this occasion, reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and the Jami' of Tirmidhi, following a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه, there is a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which he said: If I had been in a prison for so long, as Yūsuf عليه السلام had been, and had I then been summoned for release, I would have accepted it immediately.

And in a report from Imām al-Ṭabarī, the words are: The patience, forbearance and many other noble traits of his character are astonishing. When he was asked to give an interpretation of the dream of the king while still being in prison, had I been in his place, I would have, before giving the interpretation, placed a condition that I should be taken out of the prison before I could give an interpretation of that dream. Again, when the emissary of the king brought in the message of his release, had I been in his place, I would have immediately started walking towards the gate of the prison. (Qurtubī)

It should be noted that the purpose in this Ḥadīth is to praise the patience, forbearance and the many noble traits of the character of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. But, by comparing the response of Sayyidnā Yūsuf in the present situation which he supposedly attributed to himself, he seems to be saying that had he been there in his place, he would have not elected to delay his release. If this is taken to mean that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is calling the conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام better and, in the case of his own august person, he is saying that had he been in his place, he would have not been able to match that preferred conduct, rather, would have settled for the less preferred, it is obviously not upto the station of the one who is called the foremost among prophets, may peace

be upon them all. To answer that, it may be said that he is, no doubt, the foremost among prophets, but the precedence of some other prophet in a certain part of his conduct would not be considered contrary to it.

In addition to that, as said in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, it is also possible that the *modus operandi* employed by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is an outstanding proof of his patience, forbearance and noble traits of character - and is highly commendable at its place. But, the pragmatic method of doing things which the Holy Prophet ﷺ attributed to himself was particularly appropriate to and better for educating his community and offering to its teeming masses the best course of action likely to bring nothing but good to them. The reason in the present setting is that the temperament of kings changes. Placing trust in them is not a wise thing to do. On an occasion such as this, putting conditions or delaying the process is not the appropriate thing to do for common people. The probability remains that the king may change his opinion and one is left to rot in that prison, as it had long been the practice. As for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, he is a prophet of Allah. As such, he could have been given to understand by Allah Ta'ālā that the delay he would cause would not go against his interest in any way. But, others do not enjoy that degree of closeness to Allah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was mercy for all the worlds. In his temperament and taste, he had an elemental rapport with the entire creation of Allah. He always preferred to make things easier and better for the great masses of people. To him this was more important. Therefore, he said: If he had the opportunity, he would have not delayed. Allah knows best.

Verses 51 - 52

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمْ إِذْ رَاوَدْتُنَّ يُوسُفَ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ۖ قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا
عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُوءٍ ۗ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ الثَّنِ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ أَنَا
رَاوَدْتُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٥١﴾ ذَلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ أَنِّي لَمْ أَخُنْهُ
بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخَائِنِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

He (the king) said, "What was your case, O women, when you seduced Yūsuf?" They said, "God forbid, we know of

no evil in him." The governor's wife said, "Now the truth has come to light. I did seduce him, and he is of the truthful." [51] (Then Yūsuf said,) "That was because he (the governor) may know that I did not betray him in his absence and that Allah does not lead the guile of betrayers to success." [52]

Commentary

When the royal emissary delivered to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام the order of his release and invited him to see the king, he asked him to first have his case investigated through the women who had cut their hands. His approach was based on many wise considerations. Allah Ta'ālā bestows on His prophets a perfect faith, He also gives them matching intelligence and insight into matters and conditions they have to face. From the tenor of the royal message, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had deduced that the king of Egypt was going to confer some honour on him after his release from the prison. At that time, wisdom demanded that the reality of the misconduct for which he was blamed and because of which he was confined into the prison must become fully clear before everyone concerned and no one remains in doubt about his innocence. If this was not done, the outcome would be that people would stop talking for a while because of the royal honour bestowed on him, but these doubts would keep ticking in their hearts making them think that he was the person who had violated the honour of his master. That such conditions could emerge in royal courts and the king becomes influenced by such popular thoughts is not a possibility too far out. Therefore, he considered it necessary that this matter should be straightened out and cleaned up before his release. In the second (52) of the two verses cited above, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has himself pointed out to two considerations implied in the way he acted and in the option of delaying his release.

The first consideration was: ذَلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ أَتَىٰ لَمْ أَخْنُهِ بِالْغَيْبِ It means: I delayed my release so that the 'Azīz of Miṣr comes to know for sure that I did not betray him in any way during his absence.

He was so concerned about making the 'Azīz of Miṣr become assured of his innocence because he thought it would be terrible if the 'Azīz of Miṣr continues to harbour doubts in his heart against him and suffer more from them when unable to say much after the royal honour has been conferred on him. If so, he would be displeased with the honour

given to him and far more painful would be the silence he would have to maintain. Since, he had been his master when he lived with him, his pain was too much to bear for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, intrinsically gentle as he was. Then, it was equally obvious that once the 'Azīz of Miṣr came to believe in his innocence, people will stop talking by themselves.

The second consideration he mentions is: وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخَائِنِينَ, that is, he asked for investigations to be made in order that people may know that Allah does not lead the guile of betrayers to success.

This statement could be taken to mean that an investigation would expose the betrayal of the betrayers and people would stand warned that betrayers are finally disgraced leaving a lesson for others to stay away from doing things like that in the future. Also possible here is another meaning, that is, had Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام received the royal honours in the same climate of doubt, it may have occurred to all watchers that it was not impossible to betray and be honoured at the same time. This would have distorted their faith in fidelity and would have driven away the distaste for betrayal from their hearts. However, it was because of these two considerations that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not favour his leaving the prison immediately after having received the message of his release. In fact, there was a touch of royal elegance in his manner when he demanded that his case be investigated first.

A gist of this appears in verse 51: قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمْ إِذْ رَأَوْدُنَّ يُوسُفَ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ that is, the king called for the women who had cut their hands and asked them: 'What was your case, O women, when you seduced Yūsuf?' This question of the king tells us that he, on his part, had become certain that the party at fault was not Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He took those women to be at fault, therefore, he said: 'when you seduced Yūsuf.' After that, the answer given by the women appears as follows:

قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُوءٍ ۖ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ الْقَنْ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ أَنَا رَأَوْدُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

They said, 'God forbid, we know of no evil in him.' The governor's wife (also present there) said, 'Now, the truth has come to light. I did seduce him, and he is of the truthful.'

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had not named the wife of the governor, the 'Azīz of Miṣr, as part of the investigations, but that is how things happen

when Allah *jalla thana'uh* decides to honour someone - people would rise and speak up, come forward and tell the truth, without let or hinderance or demur. So it was on this occasion. The wife of the governor found the courage. She herself proclaimed the truth.

Upto this point, in what you have heard about Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, there is good guidance for our lives and solutions of many problems as well. Eight of such rulings have appeared under our comments on Verses 36-42. An additional six which come out from the present verses are being given below.

Rulings:

9. Allah Ta'ālā Himself manages things for His favoured servants by releasing unseen arrangements which help them achieve their objectives - for He does not like them to become indebted to anyone else created by Him. This was the reason why the message of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام given to the prisoner-to-be-released in which he was asked to mention him to the king was made to be forgotten. Later, in its place, a very special arrangement was made through the workings of the unseen which was designed to serve two objectives at the same time, that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام would not become indebted to anyone's favour to start with, and that the main purpose of his release from the prison would stand achieved with full honour and dignity waiting for him.

To set this unseen plan in motion, the king of Egypt was made to see a disturbing dream, the interpretation of which proved to be beyond the abilities of the experts he had at his court. So, driven by need, recourse had to be made to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. (Ibn Kathīr)

10. Prophetic conduct is a mirror of high morals. Consider the behaviour of the prisoner who was released. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had simply asked him to mention his name to the king. But he was unable to do even this much for him. As a result of his neglect, he had to spend seven more years in the prison. Now the same prisoner returns to him after seven years carrying a job of his own, that of finding out the interpretation of the same king's dream, the king to whom he had been asked to mention Sayyidnā Yūsuf's name and which he did not. In a situation like that, it was natural that he should have admonished him, even become angry at him for not having done something so insignificant. But, Sayyid-

nā Yūsuf ﷺ acted in accord with his prophetic morals when he, not to say much about an admonition, did not even mention the episode itself. (Ibn Kathīr & Qurṭubī)

11. Anbiyā' and 'Ulamā' have a dual duty. They should naturally be concerned about the attitude of people towards their 'Ākhirah. They have to help them out with good counsel in this crucial matter by shielding them from deeds which will become their punishment in the 'Ākhirah. Then, along with it, they should also keep a constant watch on the economic condition of Muslims so that they do not suffer - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ. On this occasion, he did not consider it sufficient to simply give the interpretation of the dream. Instead, he gave a wise and well-meaning advice as well. He suggested to them that they should leave the entire wheat crop in the ears only taking out what was needed so that the grain so stored would not go bad in later years.

12. An 'Ālim whose guidance is relied upon by Muslims should also watch out that he is not suspected by people - even though such a suspicion be totally unfounded. Efforts should be made to stay safe from this too - because suspicion, whether from ignorance or misunderstanding, does interfere with the work of *da'wah* and teaching they carry out, and goes on to lighten the effect of what is said. (Qurṭubī) The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: Stay away even from places and occasions of blame. It means that one should try to stay away from places and occasions where and when someone gets an opportunity to put a blame on the next person. This rule applies to Muslims generally. Those who are prominent among them, the 'Ulamā' particularly, they have to observe twice as much precaution. The example of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is before us. He was Divinely protected from all defects and sins. He too made a point to observe this precaution. Once, when one of his blessed wives was passing by a small side-street of Madīnah with him, some Companion appeared before them. While he was still some distance away from them, the Holy Prophet ﷺ told him that such and such wife of his was with him. He did this so that the onlooker does not fall into some doubt that the lady going there was a stranger. In the present situation, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, despite orders for his release and the invitation to see the king, tried well before his release that any doubts people may have should be removed.

13. If someone is obligated to a person, because of his rights on him and is, as such, deserving of respect, then, should there come a situation in which, under inevitable circumstances, some sort of action has to be taken against that person, in that case too, giving due consideration to the right and respect of that person, to the best of one's ability, is the duty of a thorough gentleman. This is as it was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to secure his absolvment from the blame. It will be recalled that while referring his matter for investigations, he had not named either the 'Azīz of Miṣr, or his wife. He had simply mentioned the women who had cut their hands. (Qurṭubī) - because, he could still achieve his objective.

14. Taught here are the highest and noblest traits of character. We can see that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had suffered the loss of his freedom for seven or twelve years in the prison but, when he was released, the taking of revenge was a far cry, he did not even bear by the idea that someone would be put to the least inconvenience on his account - as particularly taken into consideration in the verse: لِيَعْلَمَ أَيُّ لَمْ أَخْنَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ (so that he may know that I did not betray him in his absence - 52).

Verses 53 - 57

وَمَا أُبْرِئُ نَفْسِي ۚ إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَرَجِمَ رَبِّي ۖ إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ أَسْتَخْلِصْهُ لِنَفْسِي ۚ فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ إِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلَيْمُ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ يَتَّبِعُوهُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ ۖ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَلَا جُرْأَ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

"And I do not absolve my inner self of blame. Surely, man's inner self often incites to evil, unless my Lord shows mercy. Certainly, my Lord is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [53]

And the king said, "Bring him to me, and I shall make him (work) for myself alone." So, when he (the king) talked to him (Yūsuf), he said, "To day you are with us firmly accomodated and trusted." [54] He said, "Appoint me to (supervise) the treasures of the land. I am indeed a knowledgeable keeper." [55]

And thus We gave Yūsuf power in the land. He could settle there wherever he wished. We extend Our mercy to whomsoever We will, and We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds. [56] And the reward of the Hereafter is surely better for those who believe and keep fearing Allah. [57]

Commentary

Claiming Purity for one's own Self is not proper except under special Conditions

Stated in the previous verse (52) was the statement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) that he did not favour his release from the prison before he has been exonerated through a full investigation of the blame imputed to him so that the governor and the king of Egypt can arrive at full certainty that he was not guilty of any betrayal and that the blame was totally unfounded. In this statement, the reference to his freedom from blame and his purity of conduct was being made as based on an inevitable necessity - which outwardly gave the impression of a pronouncement of personal integrity and purity - and that was something not welcome in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā as is proved from the words of the Holy Qur'an where it is said: أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْكُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ بِاللَّهِ يُزَكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ (Have you not seen those who claim sanctity for themselves? In fact, Allah sanctifies whomsoever He wills - 4:49). Again, in Sūrah An-Najm, it was said: فَلَا تُزَكُّوْا أَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى (Do not claim sanctity for your selves; He knows best who it is that guards against evil - 53:32).

It was for this reason that Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) has, in the present verse (53), not allowed his plea of innocence in this matter to remain unqualified. As evident, he has stressed upon the reality that by saying what he is saying he has no intention to claim any piety or purity for himself. The truth of the matter is that human self, by nature, keeps pulling everyone to what is bad - except those who are blessed with mercy from the Lord who would make them immunely pure against the evil instigations of their self. They are the blessed prophets. The Qur'an

calls such immunized selves: *نفس مطمئنه* (the self or soul at peace) (Al-Fajr: 89:27). Thus, the substance of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said was: In a trial of such magnitude, my remaining safe from sin was no personal achievement of mine. In fact, this was a result of the mercy and help of Allah Ta'ālā alone. Had He not removed evil desires from my heart, I would have become like the rest of human beings who would be prone to surrender before their desires.

According to some narrations, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said this sentence because a kind of 'thought' did, after all, emerge in his heart - though, limited to a non-voluntary scruple - but, was an unwelcome slip anyway considering the elegant station of prophethood with which he was blessed. Therefore, he expressly confessed that he did not totally absolve his inner self from blame.

The Three States of Human Self

In this verse (53), a problem which needs to be considered is that it declares every human self as often inciting to evil: *أَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ* (*ammāratum-bis-sū'*). This is as it appears in a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have asked the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم: What do you think about a companion who, if you treat him nicely, feed him, clothe him, still he would throw you in all sorts of troubles - and if you insult him, and keep him hungry and naked, he would do what is good for you? The Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم said: Yā Rasūl Allāh, there just cannot be a companion worse than him in this whole world! He said: By Him in whose hands rests my life, your self inside you is such a companion. (Qurṭubī) And it appears in another Ḥadīth: Your greatest enemy is your own self which not only disgraces you by getting you involved in evil deeds, but also makes you run into all sorts of troubles.

However, the cited verse and Ḥadīth narrations given above tell us that human self does usually demand the doing of what is bad from us. But, in Sūrah Al-Qiyāmah, this very human self has been given the honour of being called by the sobrequit: *لَوَّامَةٌ* (*lawwāmah* : reproaching) placing it at a level that the Lord of All Honour has sworn by it: *لَا أَقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ وَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ* (I do swear by the day of Judgement and I do swear by the reproaching self - 75:1,2). Then, in Sūrah Al-Fajr, by calling this very human self: *نفس مطمئنه* (*muṭma'innah*: at peace), glad tidings of Jannah have been given: *يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ* (O self at peace, come back to

your Lord ... 89:27,28). Thus, the human self has been called as inciting to evil at one place, as reproaching at another, and as being at peace at yet another.

To explain, it can be said that the human self when on its own does incite to evil deeds and is called: Ammārah. But, when one does not follow its dictates because of the fear of Allah and 'Ākhirah, his or her self becomes Lawwāmah, that is, hates evil deeds, repents from them and seeks forgiveness - as is true in the case of the righteous people of the Muslim Ummah at large. And when someone keeps striving hard against his or her self, and brings it to a state where the very urge to turn to evil deeds does not remain there anymore, then, that self becomes what is called: Muṭma'innah (the self at peace). Righteous people can arrive at this state through spiritual strivings. Still, there is no certainty that this state will continue for ever. But, the prophets of Allah, may peace be upon them all, are Divinely blessed with such self at peace without any previous striving - and it always remains constant at that state. Thus, it is in terms of three states of human self that three kinds of acts have been attributed to it.

At the end of the verse (53), it was said: إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (Certainly, my Lord is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful) which has a hint in the word: غفور : Ghafūr: Most-Forgiving. When the self that incites to evil deeds (Ammārah) is ashamed of its doings, repents, corrects and becomes the reproaching self (Lawwāmah), then, certainly great is the forgiveness of Allah - He will forgive. The word: رحيم (Raḥīm : Very-Merciful) indicates that a person who is blessed with a self at peace (Muṭma'innah), that too is nothing but a result of the mercy of Allah.

In the next verse (54) which begins with the words: وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ أَتُؤْتِي بِهِ (Bring him to me ...), it has been said, when the king of Egypt investigated about the event, as requested by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Zulaikhā and all other women concerned with it confessed to the truth. The king, then, ordered that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام be brought to him so that he can appoint him as his personal adviser. According to the royal order, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was brought with full honours from the prison to the royal court. When he got an idea of his full potential by talking to him, the king said: 'Today you are with us firmly accomodated and trusted.'

Imām al-Baghāwī reports: When the emissary of the king arrived again at the prison to convey the invitation of the king to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, he prayed for all inmates of the prison, took a ritual bath and donned a new dress. When he arrived at the royal court, the *du'ā'* he made was:

حَسْبِيَ رَبِّي مِنْ دُنْيَايَ وَحَسْبِيَ رَبِّي مِنْ خَلْقِهِ عَزَّجَارُهُ، وَجَلَّ ثَنَائُهُ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُهُ

For me sufficient is my Lord against my world and, for me, sufficient is my Lord against the whole creation. Mighty is he who comes under His protection; and most sublime is His praise; and there is no deity worthy of worship other than Him.

When he reached inside the court, he turned to Allah again, prayed again in the same spirit and greeted the court in Arabic saying: *السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ* (Peace on you and the mercy of Allah). For the king, the prayer he made was in Hebrew. The king, though he knew many languages, was not aware of Arabic and Hebrew. It was Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who told him that the *Salām* was in Arabic and the *Du'ā'*, in Hebrew.

It also appears in a narration that the king talked to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in many different languages and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام replied to him in the language spoken by him, adding Arabic and Hebrew as two additional languages which the king did not know. This episode greatly increased respect for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in the heart of the king.

After that, the king wished to hear him give the interpretation of his dream directly before him. In response, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام first described before him particular details of his dream which he himself had not told anyone about, and then told him the interpretation as he had wished.

The king was astonished. Though, it was not so much about the interpretation given. What made him really wonder was how could he find out all those details. After that, the king sought his counsel on what should he do next. The advice given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was: During the first seven years of expected heavy rains, you should have arrangements made so that cultivation and crops yield their highest. This could be done by giving incentives to people to make sure that their maximum land areas come under cultivation and crops turn out plentiful

- and let them keep storing one fifth of their total produce with them. Thus, the people of Egypt would have stored with them enough for the seven years of famine and you would not have to worry on their account. Keep whatever supply of grains comes to the government through fixed taxes or state lands stored for those coming from outside the country - because, this famine will be wide-spread. People living in adjoining countries would need your help. At that time, you may come to the help of many a deprived people around you by giving it to them. Even if you were to put an ordinary price on it, you can be sure of collecting in the government treasury the amount of wealth that had never been there. The king was immensely pleased with this advice, but did wonder how would such a stupendous plan be managed, and who would do that. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: **إِجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ** that is, 'appoint me to the treasures of the land (which includes the produce of the land) for I am indeed a knowledgeable keeper (fully capable of conserving and guarding it, and aware of where to spend and how much to spend). (Qurṭubī & Mazharī)

In the two words appearing here (*ḥafīẓ* and *'alīm*), Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has combined together all functional virtues a genuine Finance Minister should have. To make it simple, it can be said that the chief trustee and manager of a national treasury needs to do two things: (1) He should not allow government property to be wasted, in fact, should collect, conserve and protect it fully. Then, he should see to it that it is not spent on non-deserving people, or on false heads of expenditure. (2) Then, he should not fall short in spending what has to be spent and where it has to be spent and, at the same time, he should not spend more than the quantum of the need. Thus, the word: **حَفِيظٌ** (*ḥafīẓ* : keeper) is the full guarantee of the first need, and the word: **عَلِيمٌ** (*'alīm* : knowledgeable), that of the second.

Though the king of Egypt was personally attached to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام because of his many excellences, honesty and wisdom, but he did not actually hand over the office of the Finance Ministry to him. However, he did make him stay with him as his honoured guest for a year.

After the passage of one year, not only that he appointed him to be the Finance Minister, but also entrusted to him the management of the rest of his state affairs. Perhaps, he thought that giving such major of-

fice to him without first getting acquainted with his manners, morals and habits by keeping him close to him at his house was not appropriate.

Some commentators have written, when Qitfir (Potiphar), the husband of Zulaikhā died during this period, the king of Egypt arranged her marriage with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Then, he said to her: Is it not better than what you had wished? Zulaikhā confessed to her being at fault, giving her excuse for having done what she did.

Allah *jalla thana'uh* granted them a life full of honour and comfort. According to historical narrations, they were also blessed with two sons, named Ifra'im and Manshā.

According to some narrations, after the marriage, Allah Ta'ālā had put in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام more love for Zulaikhā than she ever had for him. So much so that there came a time when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام complained to her: Why is it that you do not love me as much as you did before? Zulaikhā told him: Through you I am now blessed with the love of Allah Ta'ālā. With this in view, other relationships and thoughts seem to have dimmed out. This episode has been described, along with some other details, in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Mazharī.

Many teachings and guidelines which appear as part of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and are good for all human beings, have been talked about earlier. Some others are being mentioned as follows:

Rulings and Guidelines

1. In the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: وَمَا أْبْرَأُ نَفْسِي (And I do not absolve my inner self of blame - 53), there is good guidance for the servants of Allah who fear Him and are righteous, pious and abstaining. They should realize that they should not, when they have the Taufiq of remaining safe from some sin, wax proud about it, never taking those involved with sins as low and inferior. Instead of that, they should ponder over the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, let it go into their heart and become its fixed response - that is, 'this is no personal achievement of ours; it is only Allah Ta'ālā whose grace stopped our inner self, which incites to evil, overcome us - otherwise, this self of man would often pull him towards deeds which are evil.'

Seeking a Government Office is Not Permissible - Except under Particular Conditions

2. From: **اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ** (Appoint me to (supervise) the treasures of the land - 54), we learn that the seeking of an office or position with the government is permissible under particular conditions - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf **عليه السلام** when he sought to be appointed to supervise and manage the treasures of the land.

But, in the light of details regarding this matter, when it is known about a particular office that no one else would be able to manage it well - and one's honest self-assessment indicates that he will be able to discharge the responsibilities of that office well enough, and that there is, in it, no danger of getting involved in some sin - then, this would be a situation in which taking the initial step of seeking the office is also permissible, subject to the condition that the reason for doing this should not be the love of recognition, power and wealth. Instead, the main purpose behind this should be to serve Allah's creation genuinely and to carry to them their rights with justice and equity - as it was with Sayyidnā Yūsuf **عليه السلام** whose sole purpose was no other but this. But, wherever such a situation does not prevail, the Holy Prophet **ﷺ** has prohibited the seeking of any government office on one's own. And he did not give an office to anyone who himself made a request for it.

It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet **ﷺ** said to Sayyidnā 'Abd-ur-Raḥmān ibn Samurah **رضي الله عنه**: Never seek an office (of authority or responsibility) because even if you get it by asking for it, the support of Allah Ta'ālā, through which you could stay safe from slips and errors, will not be there. And if you get an office without the asking and seeking, help and support of Allah Ta'ālā will be there, because of which, you will be able to fulfill the rights of that office as due.

Similarly, according to another Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, someone requested the Holy Prophet **ﷺ** that he be appointed to a certain office. To him, he said:

إِنَّا لَنْ نُسْتَعْمَلَ عَلَى عَمَلِنَا مَنْ أَرَادَهُ

'We would not give our office to a person who asks for it.'

The Seeking of Office by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was based on a Wise and Benign Consideration

But, the case of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is different. He knew that the king of Egypt is a disbeliever. So is his staff. The country was going to be hit by a famine. At that time, selfish people would have no mercy for the creation of Allah and millions would die of hunger. There was no one around who could be relied upon to do justice with the rights of common people. Therefore, he himself made a request for that office of responsibility - though, he had to support his request by pointing out to some areas of his expertise, as a matter of necessity, of course, so that the king becomes satisfied and entrusts the office with him.

Even today, if someone feels that there is an office of government for which there is no one available, specially someone who would discharge the responsibilities of that office as due - and his honest self-assessment assures that he would be able to discharge the responsibilities of that office as due - then, it is permissible for him, in fact, it is obligatory (*wājib*) on him to seek that office. But, this will not be to satisfy his own desire for recognition, power or wealth. Instead, it has to be for the purpose of serving people, a mission which relates to the intention and plan in the heart, something which is all too open before Allah Ta'ālā. (Qurṭubī)

That the rightly-guided Khulafā', may Allah be pleased with them all, assumed the responsibilities of the office of Khilāfah was because they knew that no one else would be able to discharge that responsibility at that time as due. The differences attributed to Sayyidnā 'Alī, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, Sayyidnā Ḥusain, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr and others رضي الله عنهم were all based on that conviction. Everyone of them thought that he would be the one to discharge the responsibilities of Khilāfah at that time with more wisdom and strength and better than others. None of them was motivated to seek recognition, power or wealth as his principal aim.

Is It Permissible to Accept an Office of a Kāfir Government?

3. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام accepted to serve under the king of Egypt, though he was a disbeliever. This tells us that accepting an office of government headed by a disbelieving or sinning ruler is permissible under particular conditions.

But, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ, while commenting on the verse: **فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا**

لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ (never shall I be a help to those who sin - 28:17), has written: In the light of this verse, it is not permissible to help the unjust and the disbelieving. And it is obvious that, accepting an office in their government amounts to becoming a part of their function and providing help to them. Such help has been declared as Ḥarām (forbidden) in many verses of the Holy Qur'ān.

As for the position of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in this matter, not only that he accepted the office, in fact, asked for it. According to the respected Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, the reason for this was that the king of Egypt had become a believer, a Muslim, at that time. Since there is no proof in the Qur'ān and Sunnah which could support this proposition, the majority of commentators have given another reason for his action. According to them, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had already found out about the king of Egypt that he would not interfere in the performance of his duties. He will not compel him to enforce laws contrary to his faith. He will give him full rights to act in accordance with his discretion and in line with the law of truth. With such rights and powers in hand when one is not compelled to obey a law counter to his Shari'ah, it is possible that one may serve under someone unjust and disbelieving - though, the repugnance of having to help and cooperate with that unjust and disbelieving person remains where it initially was. But, there are circumstances in which it is not possible to remove such a person from the office of power held by him. Then, on the other hand, if there be a strong apprehension that by not accepting the office under that person, rights of many servants of Allah will be wasted, or that they may be oppressed, then, this would be a situation of compulsion, and there is this much room for cooperation in the matter. This stands proved from the conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which is covered by the provision that one would not have to commit something which goes against the Shari'ah one believes in - because, this will not be helping him in his sin, though, it may do so as a remote cause. But, as for the remote causes of help, there is room in the Shari'ah under given conditions. Details have been described by Muslim jurists. Many righteous elders among the Ṣaḥābah and Ṭabi'īn have faced such conditions and it stands proved that they, under such conditions, have accepted to work on offices given by oppressive rulers. (Qurṭubī & Mazḥarī)

‘Allāma Al-Māwardī, in his book about the political implications of religious law has said: Some commentators, on the basis of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did in this matter, have ruled the accepting of office with rulers who do not believe and are unjust as permissible, subject to the condition that one does not have to do anything against the Sharī‘ah. Other commentators have ruled that it is not permissible even with this condition attached, because this too supports and promotes people who are unjust and oppressive. They give many interpretations of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did. The substance is that this conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was particular to his person, or to his Sharī‘ah. Now, it is not permissible for others. However, the majority of Muslim scholars and jurists have gone by the first proposition and ruled it as permissible. (Qurtubī)

According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, when it is known that, should the learned and the righteous refuse to accept such office, rights of people will be wasted and justice will not be done, then, accepting such office is permissible, in fact, it is an act of *thawāb* - subject to the condition that, while working on it, one is not compelled to do things which are against the Sharī‘ah.

A Functional Statement of Some Personal Ability is Not Included under Self-Sanctification prohibited by the Holy Qur‘ān

4. The saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: **إِنِّي خَفِيزٌ عَلِيمٌ** (I am a knowledgeable keeper) proves that mentioning some personal qualities, expertise or ability when there is a need to do that is not included under self-sanctification which has been prohibited in the Holy Qur‘ān - of course, subject to the condition that such mentioning is not prompted by pride, arrogance or boastfulness.

The Objective of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was to Establish the Dīn of Allah

Said in verse 55 was:

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ يَتَّبِعُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يُشَاءُ ۖ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ
وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And thus We gave Yūsuf power in the land. He could settle there wherever he wished. We extend Our mercy to whomsoever We will, and We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds.

For details, it can be said that, after an experimental period of one year, the king of Egypt arranged a special celebration in his court to which he invited all officials and dignitaries of the state. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was brought into the gathering with a crown on his head. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was given, not simply the charge of the state treasury, but the charge of virtually the whole state. Having done this, the king himself retired from active involvement with the affairs of the state. (Qurṭubī, Maḥḥarī and others)

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام managed the affairs of the state with such ability that no one had any reason to complain. The whole country loved him. Peace and prosperity prevailed all over. Even Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام himself faced no problems or pains in executing the many responsibilities of the government.

Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, has said: Since Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, under the surface grandeur of his rule over the country, aimed at nothing but that the command of Allah Ta'ālā be carried out there and that the faith given by Him becomes firmly established. Therefore, he never lost sight of his basic objective, that is, inviting the king of Egypt to faith and Islām. As time passed, his efforts bore fruits by the grace of Allah and the king of Egypt too became a believing Muslim.

Shun Sin, Have Faith, Keep Fearing Allah: The Reward of the Hereafter is Yours Too

At the end, verse 57 declares:

وَلَا جَزَاءَ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ

And the reward of the Hereafter is surely better for those who keep fearing Allah.

It means that Allah had already blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with temporal power, wealth and an ideal state - waiting for him were the high ranks of the 'Ākhirah as well. Then, it has also been made clear that the rewards and ranks of the present world and the world-to-come were not restricted to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. This was an open invitation to everyone who elects to believe, abstain from evil and keep fearing Allah.

During his tenure of rule, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had accomplished great projects designed to bring peace and comfort to the masses of his people. Their parallel would be hard to find. When, according to his interpretation of the dream, seven years of prosperity passed by and the famine set in, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام abandoned eating to his fill. People said: You have the treasures of the land of Egypt in your possession, yet you go hungry? He said: I do this so that the feeling for the hunger of my common people does not disappear from my heart. He even took an administrative step in this matter. The royal cooks were ordered to prepare only one meal a day, at lunch time, so that the residents of the royal palace too could somehow share in the mass hunger of their people!

Verses 58 - 62

وَجَاءَ إِخْوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾
وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَازِهِمْ قَالَ أَتُنُونِي بِأَنْ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَبِيكُمْ ۚ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ
أَنِّي أُوْفَى الْكَيْلِ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كَيْلَ
لَكُمْ عِنْدِي وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالُوا سُرَّادُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ وَإِنَّا لَفَاعِلُونَ
﴿٦١﴾ وَقَالَ لِفَتْنِهِ اجْعَلُوا بَضَاعَتَهُمْ فِي رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَهَا إِذَا
أَنْقَلَبُوا إِلَى أَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

And came the brothers of Yūsuf and appeared before him. He recognized them, while they were not to recognize him. [58]

And when he equipped them with their provisions, he said, 'Bring to me your step brother from your father's side. Do you not see that I give full measure and I am the best of hosts? [59] Still, if you do not bring him to me, then you deserve no measure from me, nor shall you come even close to me.' [60]

They said, "We shall persuade his father about him and we will certainly do it." [61]

And he (Yūsuf) said to his boys, "put their capital in their camel-packs. Perhaps they will recognize it when they are back in their family. Perhaps they will come

back." [62]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was blessed by Allah Ta'ālā with full control over the country of Egypt. Described in the verses cited above is the coming of the brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to procure foodgrains. As a corollary, it was also mentioned that the brothers who came to Egypt were ten in number. The younger brother, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was not with them on this trip.

The details of the story in between were not given by the Qur'an since they can be understood contextually.

The details described by Ibn Kathīr with reference to Tafsīr authorities, Suddiyy, Muḥammad ibn Ishāq and others, even if borrowed from historical and Israelite reports, may be acceptable in a certain measure since indicators in this direction are available in the sequential arrangement of the Qur'an itself.

The authorities cited above have said that following the ministerial authority of Egypt having come into the hands of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the first seven years were, true to the interpretation of the dream, years of great prosperity and well-being for the entire country. Crops were abundant and matching were the efforts to produce and conserve. After that, the second part of this very dream unfolded itself. Came the famine which continued for full seven years. Since, at that time, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام knew in advance that this famine will continue for seven years without any break, therefore, he made arrangements to have the stock of grains present in the country stored very carefully during the initial year of the famine and saw to it that it remained preserved and protected fully and satisfactorily.

As for the local people of Egypt, foodgrain sufficient for their need was stored with them well ahead of the time. When famine spread and people living in areas around Egypt started coming there, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام set up a working system of selling grains to them according to which he would not give to one person more than one camel-load of grain. Its quantity, according to al-Qurṭubī, was one Wasaq, that is, sixty Ṣā' which, according to our weight, comes to approximately 1,953

grams.

Such was his concern for this responsibility that he himself used to oversee the sale of foodgrains. As said earlier, this famine was not limited to Egypt only. It was spread out to areas far away. The land of Can'aan, a part of Palestine - the homeland of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام with one of its cities still surviving by the name Khalīl, known for the resting places of blessed prophets Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, Ya'qūb and Yūsuf عليهم السلام - even this could not escape the ravages of the famine. Naturally, the family of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام became anxious. That was a time when news had gone around that Egypt was the place where foodgrains could be procured on payment. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had also come to know that the king of Egypt was a man of mercy and would let those who needed it have it. So, he asked his sons too to go and get some grains from Egypt.

And as they had also come to know that one person is not given more than a camel-load of grains, it was decided to send all sons on the trip. But, the youngest brother, Benyamin, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with whom Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had become very attached since the disappearance of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was held back by the father for his comfort and care.

Traveling from Can'aan, the ten brothers reached Egypt. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appeared in his royal robe as the master of the land before his brothers who had sold him as a seven year old child to the people of the caravan - an event over which, at that time, according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, forty years had passed. (Qurtubī, Maḥzarī)

It is obvious that the passage of such a long time would cause great changes in the looks of a person. It could have never occurred to them that a child once sold as a slave could become the king or minister of some country. Therefore, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not recognize him. But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did. Therefore, this is what the expression: فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ (He recognized them, while they were not to recognize him - 58) appearing in the opening verse means - for in the Arabic language, the real meaning of the word: انْكَار (inkār) is 'to take as stranger.' Therefore, the word: مُنْكَرُونَ (munkirūn) in the text comes to mean 'unable to recognize.'

About the recognizing of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Ibn Kathīr has said, on the authority of Suddiyy: When these ten brothers reached the court, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interrogated them as is done with suspicious people so that they would state the truth clearly. First of all, he asked them: You are not residents of Egypt. You speak Hebrew. How did you get here? They said: There is a great famine in our country. We have heard about you, therefore, we are here to get some grain. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام asked again: How do we know that you are telling the truth, and that you are not an enemy spy? Then, all brothers said: God forbid, we can never do that. We are the sons of the Prophet of Allah Ya'qūb عليه السلام who lives in Can'aan.

The purpose of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in asking these questions was to make his brothers open up and relate events fully. So, then he asked: Does your father have any child other than you? They said: We were twelve brothers out of whom one of the younger brothers disappeared in the forest. Our father loved him most. After him, he became attached to his younger real brother and that is why he did not send him along with us on this trip so that he can be a source of his comfort.

After having heard what they said, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام gave orders that they be lodged as royal guests and given grains according to set rules.

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had established a standing rule of procedure while distributing grains. He would not give more than one camel-load of grains to one person at one time. But, once this was consumed as calculated, he would allow it to be given a second time.

Having found out all those details from his brothers, it was only natural that he would think about a second visit by them. For this purpose in sight, one obvious arrangement he made was to tell his brothers:

اَتَوْنِي بِإِخْوَانِكُمْ مِنْ أَيْمَانِكُمْ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أَوْفَى الْكَيلِ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ

Bring to me your step brother from your father's side. Do you not see that I give full measure and I am the best of hosts? - 59

And, along with it, he gave them a warning as well:

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ

Still, if you do not bring him to me, then you deserve no measure from me [because it will prove that you have lied to me, and thus], nor shall you come even close to me. - 60

Then, he made a secret arrangement as well. He ordered his young workers on the job to collect the cash, jewelry and any other articles paid by his brothers as the cost of the grains, and tie it up secretly with their supplies in the camel-packs in a way that they should remain unaware of it while there - so that, when they open their packs after having arrived home, and find their cash and jewelry back in their hands, they may have a reason to return for grains once again.

Ibn Kathīr has described several possibilities as to why Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) acted the way he did: (1) It occurred to him that, perhaps they may not have anything other than the cash and jewelry they had brought. If so, they would be unable to come for the grains again. (2) Perhaps, he could not bear by the idea of taking the price of foodstuff from his father and brothers, therefore, he paid the amount due from his pocket and had it deposited in the royal treasury, and returned their cash and jewelry back to them. (3) He knew when their cash and jewelry is found in their supplies back home and his father learns about it, then he, being a prophet of Allah, would consider what has been thus found to be a trust of the Egyptian Treasury and would certainly have it returned, therefore, the return of their brothers would become more assured.

However, it can be said briefly that Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) made all these arrangements so that his brothers could keep coming to him in the future and that he could also meet his younger real brother.

A Ruling:

From this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام), we learn that, should the economic condition of a country worsen to the limit that the failure of the government to check the decline may cause people to become deprived of the basic necessities of life, then, the government is justified in taking over the regulation and control of such supplies and it could also fix an appropriate price of foodgrains. Muslim jurists have explained this provision in details.

A Special Note:

There is something which strikes as unusual in this story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. We see that his exalted father, the prophet of Allah, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was so affected by his separation that constant weeping made him lose his eyesight. Then, on the other hand, we have Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, a prophet and messenger of Allah like him, one who naturally loved his father and knew his rights on him fully well. But, during this long period of forty years, how was it that it did not occur to him even once that his father must be missing him miserably and that it would be nice to let him know about his well-being through some source. The sending of such information was not too far out a proposition even when he had reached Egypt as a slave. Then, once he was in the home of the 'Azīz of Miṣr, he had the freedom, comfort and time to do that. It was not so difficult to send a message to his home through some source. For that matter, this could have been done when he was in the prison as well. Who does not know that messages from inside those walls can be delivered anywhere, near or far? Then, came the time when Allah Ta'ālā took him out of the prison with all honours and the authority over the land of Egypt became his own. That was a time when he should have presented himself before his father as his primary task. And had it been against some state consideration, he could have at the least sent an emissary to comfort his father, something ordinary given the status he had.

But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has not been reported to have even intended to do that. Not to say much about his intention, when his brothers came to procure foodgrains, he sent them back without telling them about the real situation.

These are conditions which cannot be imagined about an ordinary human being. How was it possible for an exalted messenger of Allah to bear by this situation?

The only answer to this surprising silence which kept returning to me was that may be Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite wisdom, had stopped Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from exposing himself. This was found authentically clarified in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that Allah Ta'ālā had, through a Waḥy (revelation), stopped Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from sending any news about himself to his home.

It is Allah alone who knows the workings of His infinite wisdom. To comprehend it all is humanly impossible. But, once in a while, there may be something one could see through. Here too, as it appears, the real consideration of wisdom was to complete the trial of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. This was the reason why, at the very initial stage of the event, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had realized that his son, Yūsuf, was not eaten up by a wolf but that it was some trick of his brothers, the natural demand of the situation was that he should have visited the place of the reported incident and made necessary investigations. But, as Allah Ta'ālā would have it, he was unable to think on those lines. Then, after a long passage of time, he also said to his brothers: 'Go and search for Yūsuf and his brother.' When Allah Ta'ālā wills to do something, this is the way He would put all its causes together.

Verses 63 - 66

فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ آبِيهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا آخَانَا
نَكْتُلْ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَفِظُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ قَالَ هَلْ أُمْنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَمَا أَمِيتُكُمْ
عَلَىٰ أَخِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ قَالَ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَفِظًا ۖ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾
وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ ۖ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا
مَا نَبْغِي ۖ هَذِهِ بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا ۖ وَنَمِيرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ أَخَانَا
وَنَزِدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيرٍ ۖ ذَلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ
تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ لَتَأْتِنِنِي بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ ۖ فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ
مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ ﴿٦٦﴾

So, when they returned to their father, they said, "O our father, the (required) measure (of grain) has been withheld from us, therefore, send our brother with us, so that we may receive our full measure. And, of course, we are his guards." [63]

He said, "Shall I trust you about him as I trusted you earlier about his brother? Well, Allah is the best guardian and He is the most-merciful of all the merciful." [64]

And when they opened their baggage, they found their capital given back to them. They said, "Our father, what else do we want? Here is our capital given back to us, and we shall bring food to our family, protect our brother and add the measure of one camel more. That is an easy measure." [65]

He said, "I shall never send him with you until you give me a pledge in the name of Allah that you will definitely bring him back to me, unless you are overpowered (by circumstances)." So, when they gave him their pledge, he said, "Allah is watchful over what we say." [66]

Commentary

The verses appearing above carry the remaining segment of the event, that is, when the brothers of Yūsuf returned home with foodgrains from Egypt, they told their father about what had happened there, specially about the condition imposed by the 'Azīz of Miṣr that they would receive foodgrains in the future only if they would bring their younger brother with them. So they requested their father to let Benjamin also accompany them in order that they may receive foodgrains in the future as well. Then, they would be there to protect this brother of theirs at its best with assurance that they would see to it that he faces no inconvenience during the trip.

Their father asked them if they wanted him to trust them with Benjamin as he had done before with their brother, Yūsuf. The drive of his remark makes it obvious that he did not trust their word. He had trusted them once, and suffered - for they had promised in the same words spoken earlier that they would guard him.

This much was an answer to what they had said. But, he had the need of the family in sight, and because he was blessed with the quality of trust in the Divine dispensation of matters, he talked about the reality as he knew it saying, in effect, that man has no control over his gain or loss unless Allah Ta'ālā Himself so wills. And when He wills it, it cannot be diverted or averted by anyone. Therefore, it is incorrect to place one's trust in the created beings of Allah in this matter and equally inappropriate is the dependence on their complaints to settle it.

Therefore, he said: **فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَفِظًا** (Well, Allah is the best guardian - 64), that is, he had already seen the outcome of their guardianship earlier,

now he was placing his trust in Allah Ta'ālā alone as his guardian. Then, he added: **وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ** (and He is the most merciful of all the merciful - 64), that is, only from Him, he could hope that He would look at his old age and the sorrows he was surrounded with and would not let more shocks shake him.

In short, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb **عليه السلام** did not rely on apparent conditions and on the pledges given by his sons, but did agree to send his youngest son with his brothers solely because he had now placed his trust in Allah Ta'ālā.

At this stage, verse 65 opens with the words:

وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِي هَذِهِ بِضَاعَتُنَا
رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا وَنَمِيرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ أَخَانَا وَنَزِدُّادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيرٍ ذَلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ

And when they opened their baggage, they found their capital given back to them. They said, "Our father, what else do we want? Here is our capital given back to us, and we shall bring food to our family, protect our brother and add the measure of one camel more. That is an easy measure."

It will be noticed that, prior to this verse, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf **عليه السلام** were talking about what had happened to them on their journey, before they had opened their baggage. After that, when they opened the baggage and saw that their entire capital with which they had paid for the foodgrains was present inside the baggage, they realized that this was not done by mistake, in fact, their capital had been returned to them. Therefore, they said: **رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا** (given back to us). Then, to their father they said: **مَا نَبْغِي** (what else do we want?) that is, 'the grains are here and what we paid for it has also been returned to us. Now we should definitely go back there in peace with our brother because the way we have been treated shows that the 'Azīz of Miṣr is kind to us. We should have no apprehensions. It is the time that we go and bring foodgrains for the family and take care of our brother too. That we shall get an additional load of grains in the name of our brother will help - because, whatever we have brought in the present trip is much less than our needs and is likely to be consumed soon.

One sense of the sentence: **مَا نَبْغِي** (*mā nabghī*) spoken by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf **عليه السلام** is practically the same as given immediately

above, that is, 'what else do we want?' And if, in this sentence, the letter: م (mā : not) is taken in the sense of negation, it could also mean that the sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام told their father: Now that we have the price of the grain with us, we do not want anything from you. You just send our brother with us.

After hearing what they said, their father answered: لَنْ أَرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّى تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ لَتَأْتُنِي بِهِ (I shall never send Benjamin with you until you give me a pledge in the name of Allah that you will definitely bring him back to me - 66). But, could someone with the ability to see reality ever miss to realize that man, no matter how strong he may be, is, after all, dependent and helpless before the all-pervading power of Allah *jalla thanā'uh* - how then, and on what basis, would he give a pledge to bring back someone safe? The reason is that he does not have the absolute power and control to accomplish it. Therefore, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام asked his sons to give him a pledge, he added an exception to it by saying: إِلَّا أَنْ يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ 'unless you are overpowered (by circumstances).' Early Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid explains it as: unless all of you are killed. Another early Tafsīr authority, Qatādah says that it means: unless you become totally helpless and overpowered.

In the last sentence of verse 66, it was said: فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ (So, when they gave him their pledge, he said, "Allah is watchful over what we say"), that is, when his sons gave the pledge as desired on solemn oaths to satisfy their father, then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام told them that the giving and taking of solemn oaths being undertaken by them is something which ultimately rests with Allah Ta'ālā alone. It is with His *taufīq* only that one person can keep the other protected and thus become enabled to fulfill his pledge. Otherwise, man is helpless. He has nothing under his personal control.

There are many elements of guidance and injunctions for people in the verses explained above. Please take note of them and keep them in mind.

Notes of Guidance

1. If children make mistakes, relations should not be cut off with them. One should, rather, think of ways to reform their conduct. The mistakes made by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were serious.

They were sins, major and grave:

- (1) They lied to their father and made him agree to send Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ for an outing with them.
- (2) They gave a pledge to their father, then broke it.
- (3) They treated their young and innocent brother cruelly.
- (4) They caused extreme pain to their father and did not care much about it.
- (5) They conspired to kill an innocent human being.
- (6) They sold a free human being forcibly and unjustly.

These were extreme and severe crimes which demanded that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ, once he had understood that they had lied and wasted the life of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ knowingly, should have severed his relationship with these sons, or turned them out of his house. But, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ did not do that, rather, let them keep living with him, even sent them to Egypt to bring back foodgrains from there. On top of this came the situation when they had another opportunity to prevail upon their father once again in the case of their youngest brother and on this occasion too he yielded to them and allowed them to take his young son with them.

This tells us that should one's children fall into sin or make mistakes, it is the responsibility of the father to seek their correction through appropriate education and training, and as long as there is hope of betterment, let him not sever his relationship with them. This was what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ did - and finally, all of them were ashamed of their wrongdoings, turned away from sins and lived a reformed life. However, should there remain no hope of betterment in their condition, and parents realize that maintaining relationship with them poses a danger to the religious upbringing of others, then, under that condition, severing relationship with them is more appropriate.

2. Promoted here are two great qualities of character, good dealings and good manners - of which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ was a mirror. Despite such serious crimes committed by his sons, he kept dealing with them in a manner that they faced no qualms of conscience when they

made their second request to take their younger brother with them.

3. Another instruction inferred from here is that it is appropriate to admonish a wrongdoer in the interest of his betterment. This would amount to telling him that his behavior demanded that the plea made by him should be rejected, but then, he should be given the feeling that he is being given a fresh chance by forgoing what has gone before - so that his sense of shame returns to him later and he becomes totally repentant. This is what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did in the first instance. He made a caustic reference to their past record: 'Shall I trust you about Benjamin as I had trusted you earlier about Yūsuf?' But, after having warned them pointedly, he realized their penitence from their apparent condition, placed his trust in Allah and handed over his young son into their custody.

4. Placing one's trust, in the real sense, in the promise or protection of a human being is wrong. The real trust should be in Allah Ta'ālā. He alone is the real mover and maker of things and He alone is the causer of causes. To bring forth causes and to give them effect is what lies but in His control. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said: *فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَافِظًا* (Well, Allah is the best guardian).

According to a saying of Ka'b al-Aḥbār, since Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, this time, did not simply trust the word of his sons, instead, entrusted the matter with Allah Ta'ālā, therefore, Allah Ta'ālā said: 'By My honour, now I shall send both of your sons back to you.'

5. If some property or thing belonging to someone else is found in our baggage, and strong indications prove that he has tied it up in our baggage with the specific intention of giving it to us, then, keeping it and using it is permissible - as was the case with this 'capital' which came out from the baggage of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and where strong indications proved that it did not happen as a result of some oversight or forgetfulness, in fact, it was given back intentionally. That is why, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not give instructions that these articles of value be returned. But, in case there is a doubt that it has come to us, perhaps by oversight or forgetfulness, then, using it without making necessary inquiries from the owner is not permissible.

6. No one should be asked to give a pledge on oath, the fulfillment of

which does not lie fully in his control - as it was, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام took a pledge on oath from his sons that they would bring back Benjamin safe and sound, he exempted from it the situation in which they may become totally helpless or become themselves subjected to near-death circumstances.

Therefore, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked the noble Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين to give him a pledge of their obedience to him, then, he himself added a restriction to it, that is, the restriction of ability. Thus, the pledge stipulated: 'we shall obey you fully - as far as it is within our ability and control.'

7. That the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام have been asked to give a pledge that they would bring Benjamin back shows that : كفالة بالنفس (Kafālah bin-nafs) is permissible. Being a technical term of Islāmic Law, it means that it is correct to tender a personal bail or guarantee for the due appearance of a person involved in a case on its hearing date in the court.

The view of Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى differs in this respect. According to him, it is only financial guarantee that is allowed in Sharī'ah. He does not hold the personal bail (Kafālah bin-nafs) as permissible.

Verses 67 - 69

وَقَالَ يٰٓبَنِيَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوا مِنۡ بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَّادْخُلُوا مِنۡ اَبْوَابٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍ
وَمَا اُغْنِيْ عَنْكُم مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ اِنَّ الْحُكْمَ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ
تَوَكَّلْتُ ۚ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ
اَمَرَهُمْ اَبُوهُمْ ۖ مَا كَانَ يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا حَاجَةً فِىْ
نَفْسٍ يَّعْقُوْبُ قَضٰهَا ۗ وَاِنَّهٗ لَذُوْ عِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنٰهٗ وَلٰكِنۡ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ اَوٰى اِلَيْهٖ اَخَاهُ قَالَ اِنِّىْ اَنَا
اَخُوكَ فَلَا تَبْتٰسُۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يٰعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾

And he said, "O my sons, do not enter (the city) all of you from the same gate, rather, enter from different gates.

And I cannot help you in any way against (the will of) Allah. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. In Him I place my trust, and in Him should trust those who trust." [67]

And when they entered (the city) in the manner their father had advised them, he could not help them in any way against (the will of) Allah, but it was just an urge in the heart of Ya'qūb which he satisfied. He was a man of knowledge; because We had taught him, but most of the people do not know. [68]

And when they came to Yūsuf, he lodged his brother (Benyamin) with himself. He said, "Behold, I am your brother! So do not grieve for what they have been doing." [69]

Commentary

In the present verses, the second visit of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام), this time accompanied by their younger brother, has been mentioned. On that occasion, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) had told them to keep in mind that they were eleven of them going there, so they should not enter Egypt collectively from one single gate of the city of their destination. Instead of that, once they have reached the outer wall of the city, they should disperse and enter there from different gates.

The reason for this advice was his apprehension that all of them were young and, *māsha'allāh*, healthy, tall, handsome and impressive. He was concerned about them lest people find out that they were sons of the same father, and brothers to each other. May be they are affected by someone's evil eye which may bring them some harm. Or, their coming in all together may make some people envy them, or may even cause some pain to them.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) did not give them this advice the first time they went to Egypt. He did so on the occasion of their second trip. The reason for this, perhaps, is that they had entered Egypt on their first visit as common travellers and in a broken down condition. No one knew them, nor was there any danger that someone would take any special notice of their general condition. But, it so happened that, during their very first trip, the master of Egypt gave them an unusual welcome which introduced them to state functionaries and city people. Now there did

exist the danger that someone may cast an evil eye on them, or that some people start envying them for being an imposing group of visitors. Apart from it, the fact that the younger son, Benyamin, was with them this time, became the cause of the father's added attention.

The Effect of the Evil Eye is True

This tells us that human beings affected by the evil eye, or its causing pain or loss to another human being, animal etc., is true. It cannot be dismissed as ignorance, superstition or fancy. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) was concerned about it.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also confirmed its truth. It appears in a Ḥadīth: 'The evil eye makes a human being enter the grave, and a camel enter a petty pot.' Therefore, things from which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has sought refuge, and from which he has directed his Ummah to seek refuge, include: *من كل عين لامة* that is, 'I seek refuge from the evil eye.' (Qurṭubī)

Well-known is the event related to Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Ḥunayf, one of the noble Companions. It is said that there was an occasion when he took off his shirt to get ready to go for a bath. 'Āmir ibn Rabi'ah happened to cast a glance at the bright tint and healthy look of his body. The spontaneous remark he made was: 'Until this day, I have never seen a body as handsome as this!' No sooner did these words escape his mouth, an instant high temperature seized Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Ḥunayf (عليه السلام). When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was informed about it, the treatment he suggested was that 'Āmir ibn Rabi'ah should make Wuḍū', collect the water from Wuḍū' in some utensil, and let this water be poured on the body of Sahl ibn Ḥunayf. When it was done as ordered, the temperature dropped down immediately. He became fully fit, and left on the expedition he was going with the Holy Prophet ﷺ who, following this event, also gave a gentle warning to 'Āmir ibn Rabi'ah by telling him:

علام يقتل احدكم اخاه، الا ببركت، ان العين حق

'Why would someone kill his brother? (When you saw his body) you could have made a *du'ā* for *barakah*. It is true that the evil eye leaves its effect.'

This Ḥadīth also tells us that, should someone notice something un-

usual about the person or property of somebody else, let him make *du'ā'* for him that Allah Ta'ālā blesses him with *barakah* in it. According to some narrations, one should say: مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ (*Māsha' Allāhu lāquw-wata illā billāh* : Whatever Allah will - there is no power but with Him). This removes the effect of the evil eye. This also tells us that, should someone become affected by a person's evil eye, the pouring of water used by that person in washing his face, hands and feet (in Wuḍū') will help eliminate the effect of the evil eye.

Al-Qurṭubī has said that there is a consensus of all 'Ulamā' of the Muslim Ummah among *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* on the truth of the evil eye as affecting and causing harm.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, on the one hand, because of the apprehension of the evil eye, or envy, advised his sons that they should not enter all together from one single gate of the city. On the other hand, he considered it necessary to speak out about the reality behind it - the heedlessness towards which in such matters would usually cause many from among the masses to fall easy victims to superstition or baseless scruples. The real fact is that the effect of the evil eye over one's person or property is a kind of mesmerism (or an induced state as in hypnosis, though not necessarily in sleep or pre-set clinical conditions). This would be more like a harmful medicine or food which makes one sick; or, excessive heat or cold which make some diseases show up. The effective measures demonstrated by the evil eye or mesmerism are one of the customary causes which would, through the power of the eye or mind, make its effects manifest. The truth is that they themselves have no real effectiveness of their own. Instead, all universal causes operate under the perfect power, will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. No favourable measures taken against what has been Divinely destined can prove beneficial, nor can the harmfulness of some harmful measure become effective. Therefore, it was said:

وَمَا أَعْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنَّ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

And I cannot help you in any way against (the will of) Allah. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. In Him I place my trust, and in Him should trust those who trust - 67.

It means: I know that the necessary precautions I have ordered you to take so as to help you remain protected against the evil eye cannot avert the will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. What works here is but the command of Allah. However, one has been asked to do what is physically possible. Therefore, I have given this advice. But, I place my trust, not on these physical arrangements, but in Allah alone. And it is imperative for everyone that he or she should trust in and rely on Him alone - never placing one's trust in physical and material means.

The reality which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was talking about became all too visible in this trip as well. By chance it so happened that all measures taken to bring Benjamin back home safely just failed and he was detained in Egypt. As a consequence of which, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام received another severe shock. That the measure taken by him failed, as categorically mentioned in the next verse, had a purpose behind it. It means that this measure failed in terms of the essential objective, that is, the safe return of Benjamin back home - though, the measure taken to keep them protected against the evil eye or envy did succeed, because no such incident showed up during this trip. But, the unforeseen incident Divine destiny had in store for them was a factor not noticed by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, nor could he do anything to counter it. However, despite this visible failure, it was the *barakah* (blessing) of his *tawakkul* (trust) that this second shock turned out to be an antidote for the first one, and resulted in the happy reunion with both his sons, Yūsuf and Benjamin, safely and honourably.

This subject has been taken up in the succeeding verse where it is said that the sons carried out the instructions of their father and entered the city from different gates. When they did so, the desire of their father stood fulfilled - though, this measure taken by him could not avert anything already destined by Allah. But, as for the paternal love and concern of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام for his sons, this he did demonstrate to his heart's content.

Towards the end of the verse, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has been praised in the following words: وَأَنَّهُ لَدُوْعِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنَهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (He was a man of knowledge, because We had taught him, but most of the people do not know - 68). It means that his knowledge was not acquired. It did not come from books. Instead, it was directly a Divine gift. Therefore, he did

employ physical means, something legally required, and commendable. But, he did not place his total trust in it. However, the truth is that most of the people do not know the reality behind it. Thus unaware, they would fall in doubts about Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام thinking that the employment of these means did not match the station of a prophet.

Some commentators have said that the first word: علم ('ilm : knowledge) means acting in accordance with the dictate of 'ilm (knowledge). The translation in this case will be: "He was a man of action according to the knowledge We gave him". Therefore, he did not place his trust in material means, in fact, it was Allah alone he relied on and trusted in.'

Onwards from here, it was said in verse 69:

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ أَوَىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَخَاهُ قَالَ إِنِّي أَنَا أَخُوكَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ

And when they came to Yūsuf, he lodged his brother [Benjamin] with himself. He said, "Behold, I am your [lost] brother! So do not grieve for what they have been doing."

According to Tafsīr authority, Qatādah, the arrangement made by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was that two brothers were lodged in one room. This left Benjamin alone. He was asked to stay with him. When alone with him, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام disclosed his identity to his younger brother and told him that he was his real brother, Yūsuf. He comforted him and asked him not to worry about what their brothers have been doing until that time.

Rulings and Points of Guidance

Some injunctions and rulings come out from verses 67 and 68. These are given below:

1. The effect of the evil eye is true. To try to stay safe from it is permissible in Sharī'ah, and is commendable, just as one tries to stay safe from harmful foods and actions.

2. To stay safe from being envied by people, it is correct to conceal from them any special personal blessings and attributes one may have.

3. To employ physical and material means to stay safe from harmful effects is neither against *Tawakkul* (trust in Allah), nor against the stat-

us of prophets.

4. If one person apprehends likely harm or hurt coming to the other person, it is better to let him know about the danger and suggest how to stay safe from it - as done by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام.

5. When someone finds some personal excellence or blessing enjoyed by another person appear unusual to him and there be the danger that he may be affected by the evil eye, then, it becomes obligatory (*wājib*) on the beholder that he should, after noticing it, say: بَارَكَ اللَّهُ (*bārakallāh* : may Allah bless) or: مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ (*māsha'Allāh* : whatever Allah will), so that the other person remains safe from any possible harm.

6. Employing all possible means to stay safe from the evil eye is permissible. One of them is to seek its treatment through a *du'ā'* (prayer) or *ta'wīdh* (spoken or written words seeking the protection of Allah) - as was done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who, seeing the weakness of the two sons of Sayyidnā Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib, allowed him to have them be treated through *ta'wīdh* etc.

7. The ideal approach of a wise Muslim to whatever he does is that he must place his real trust in Allah Ta'ālā to begin with but, at the same time, he should not ignore physical and material means. Let him not fall short in employing whatever permissible means he can possibly assemble together to achieve his purpose - as was done by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. And the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too has taught us to do so. The Sage Rūmī has expressed this prophetic teaching in the following line: بند تو کل زانوئے اشتر به بند that is, 'Tie the leg of your camel and trust in Allah'.

This is how prophets place their trust in Allah, and this was the blessed way of our Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم.

8. A question arises here that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made efforts to call his younger brother, even insisted on it. And when he came, he even disclosed his identity before him. But, he neither thought of calling his father, nor took any steps to inform him about his well-being while in Egypt. The reason for this is the same as described earlier. There is no doubt that he did have many opportunities during those forty years when he could have sent a message to his father about himself. But,

whatever happened in this matter was Divine decree communicated through the medium of *Wahy* (revelation). Allah Ta'ālā would have not given him the permission to tell his father about himself - because he was yet to be tested once again through his separation from his son, Benjamin. It was to complete this Divine arrangement that all these situations were created.

Verses 70 - 76

فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَازِهِمْ جَعَلَ السَّقَايَةَ فِي رُحْلِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ أَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ
 أَيُّهَا الْعَبْرِيُّ إِنَّكُمْ لَسَرِقُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالُوا وَاقْبَلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ مَاذَا تَفْقِدُونَ
 ﴿٧١﴾ قَالُوا نَقْضُ صَوَاعِ الْمَلِكِ وَلِمَنْ جَاءَ بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ وَأَنَا بِهِ
 زَعِيمٌ ﴿٧٢﴾ قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا
 سَرِقِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾ قَالُوا فَمَا جَزَاؤُهُ إِن كُنتُمْ كَذِبِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالُوا جَزَاؤُهُ
 مَنْ وَجَدَ فِي رَحْلِهِ فَهُوَ جَزَاؤُهُ ۖ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَبَدَأَ
 بِأَوْعِيَّتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ اسْتَخَرَجَهَا مِنْ وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ ۖ كَذَلِكَ
 كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ ۖ مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ
 ۖ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَن نَّشَاءُ ۖ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٦﴾

Later, when he equipped them with their provisions, he placed the bowl in the camel-pack of his brother. Then, an announcer shouted out, "O people of the caravan, you are thieves." [70] Turning towards them, they said, "What are you missing?" [71] They said, "We are missing the measuring-bowl of the king, and whoever brings it back shall deserve a camel-load, and I stand surety for it." [72]

They said, "We swear by Allah, you certainly know that we did not come to make mischief in the land, nor have we ever been thieves." [73]

They said, "What is the punishment, if you are liars?" [74] They said, "It's punishment is that he, in whose baggage it is found, shall himself be the punishment. This is how we punish the wrongdoers." [75]

So, he started with their bags before the bag of his brother, then, recovered it from the bag of his brother. This is how We planned for Yūsuf. He had no right to take his brother according to the law of the king, unless Allah so willed. We elevate in ranks whomso We will. And above every man who has knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable. [76]

Commentary

The present verses describe how Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) arranged to have his real brother, Benjamin, stay on with him. All brothers were given grains according to rules. The grains for each brother was loaded on his camel, separately and by name.

In the supply of grain loaded on the camel for Benjamin, a bowl was concealed. This bowl has been called: سِقَايَه (siqāyah) at one place, and: صُوعَ الْمَلِكِ (suwā' al-malik) at another. The word: سِقَايَه (siqāyah) means a bowl used to drink water from, and: صُوعَ (suwā') too is a utensil similar to it. That it has been attributed to 'malik' or king shows the additional feature that this bowl had some special value or status. According to some narrations, it was made of a precious stone similar to emerald. Others say that it was made of gold, or silver. However, this bowl hidden in Benjamin's baggage was fairly precious besides having some special connection with the king of Egypt - whether he used it himself, or had it declared to be the official measure of grains.

In the second sentence of verse 70, it is said:

ثُمَّ أَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ أَتَتْهَا الْغِيرَانُ كُفْرًا لِّسْرِفُونِ

Then, an announcer shouted out, "O people of the caravan, you are thieves."

Here, the word: ثُمَّ (thumma : translated as 'then') shows that this public announcement was not made instantly. Instead, a temporary delay was allowed for the caravan to leave. The announcement was made after that to offset the likelihood of anyone sensing a foul play. After all, this proclaimer identified the caravan of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf as the thieves.

Verse 71 carries the response of the accused: قَالُوا وَاقْبَلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ مَاذَا تَفْقِدُونَ , that is, 'the brothers of Yūsuf turned to the announcer, as if protesting

on being made into thieves, and asked him to say what is it that you seem to have lost.' The answer given by the announcers was:

قَالُوا نَفَقْدُ صَوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ وَلِمَنْ جَاءَ بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ وَأَنَا بِهِ زَعِيمٌ

We are missing the measuring-bowl of the king, and whoever brings it back shall deserve a camel-load, and I stand a surety for it.

The question which emerges here is: Why did Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) opt for this excuse to detain Benjamin with him, specially when he knew that his separation was already shocking for his father. Now, how could he bear by giving him another shock by detaining his other brother?

The other question which arises here is far more important because it involves things like accusing innocent brothers of theft and concealing something in their baggage secretly to cause them disgrace later. These are impermissible acts. Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) was a prophet of Allah. It is difficult to visualize how would he have gone along with them.

Some commentators, such as al-Qurṭubī and others, have stated: When Benjamin recognized Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) and was at peace, he requested his brother not to send him back along with his brothers. Instead, he pleaded, he should let him stay with him. First, Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) made the excuse that his staying behind will shock their father. Then, he had no way of making him stay with him other than that blame him of theft, arrest him for it and thus keep him with him. Benjamin was so disgusted with the ways of his brothers that he was ready to go through all this.

But, even if this event were taken as correct, the heart-break caused for his father, the disgrace inflicted on all his brothers and dubbing them as thieves cannot become permissible simply because of the pleasure of Benjamin. That some commentators have interpreted the charge of theft levelled on them by the announcer as being without the knowledge and permission of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) is not valid. This is a claim without any proof and, given the anatomy of the event, incoherent too. Similar is the case of another interpretation where it has been stated that these brothers stole Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) from his father, and sold him, therefore, they were called 'thieves.' This too is a long-drawn explanation.

Therefore, the correct answer to these questions is what has been given by al-Qurṭubī and Maḥzarī. They have said: Whatever has been done and said in this connection was neither the outcome of Benjamin's wish, nor that of the initiative of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام himself. Instead of all that, all these happenings were the manifestation of the infinite wisdom of Allah alone under whose command they came to be what they were and being completed through them was the process of the trial and test of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. A hint towards this answer appears in this verse (76) of the Qur'ān itself which says: كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا يُوسُفَ : 'This is how We planned for Yūsuf (to detain his brother).'

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has very clearly attributed this excuse and plan to Himself. So, when all these things took shape as Divinely commanded, calling them impermissible becomes meaningless. They would be like the incident of the dismantling of the boat and the killing of the boy in the event relating to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Al-Khaḍir عليهم السلام. Obviously, these were sins, therefore, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام registered his disapproval of them. But, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was doing all this with Divine assent and permission under particularly expedient considerations, therefore, he was not committing any sin.

In verse 73, it was said: قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سُرِقِينَ , that is, when the royal announcer accused the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf of theft, they said that responsible people of the state know them and know that they had not come to create any disorder in the country, nor have they ever been thieves.

In verse 74, it was said: قَالُوا فَمَا جَزَاؤُهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ كَاذِبِينَ , that is, the royal staff said to them: If it stood proved that they were liars, what do they suggest should be the punishment for the theft? The answer given was: قَالُوا : جَزَاؤُهُ مَنْ وَجَدَ فِي رَحْلِهِ فَهُوَ جَزَاؤُهُ ط كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ said: 'It's punishment is that he, in whose baggage it is found, shall himself be the punishment. This is how we punish the wrongdoers.'

The sense of the statement is that the punishment for theft in the Shari'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام allowed the person whose property had been stolen to take the thief as his slave. Thus, the state functionaries made the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf to tell them the punishment of a thief as in Jacobian law and thereby had them committed to hand over

Benyamin to Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) according to their own decision following the recovery of the stolen goods from Benyamin's baggage.

Said in verse 75 was: **فَبَدَأَ بِأَوْعِيَّتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وَعَاءِ أَخِيهِ**, that is, to cover up the real plan, the state officials first searched through the baggage of all brothers. They did not open Benyamin's baggage first lest that causes any doubts.

Then, as said in the first sentence of the next verse (76): **ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ** , Benyamin's baggage was opened up last of all and recovered from it was the 'bowl of the king.' At that sight, all brothers were put to shame. They started chiding Benyamin for having disgraced them.

After that, it was said: **كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ ط مَا كَانَ لِأَخِيذَ أَحَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ**, that is, 'this is how We planned for Yūsuf.' He could have not arrested his brother under the Egyptian Imperial Law because, according to their law of theft, there was a corporal punishment for the thief after which he was to be released against the payment of twice the cost of the stolen property. But, here, he had already found out the law of theft operative in the Shari'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام). According to this law, detaining Benyamin with him became correct and valid. So, also granted through the wisdom and will of Allah Ta'ālā was this wish of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام).

Said in the last sentence of the verse is: **نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَنْ نَشَاءُ ط وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ** (We elevate in ranks whomso We will [as, in this event, the ranks of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) were elevated over his brothers]. And above every man who has knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable).

It means that Allah has given precedence to some over others in terms of knowledge. Take the highest of the high in knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable than him. And if there is someone with a knowledge which is superior to the knowledge of the best among the creation of Allah, then, we have the *Ilm* of Allah *jalla thanā'uh* which is the highest of all for ever.

Rulings and points of guidance

Some injunctions and rulings deduced from the present verses are given below:

1. The statement: **وَلَمَنْ جَاءَ بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ** (and whoever brings it back shall

deserve a camel-load) in verse 72 proves that it is valid to make a general announcement that a particular award or remuneration will be paid to anyone who performs a particular act. This is very much like the current custom of announcing rewards for the arrest of absconding criminals or for the return of lost properties. Though, this form of transaction does not fall under the juristic definition of *Ijārah* (hiring), but, in the light of this verse, the justification for this also stands proved. (Qurṭubī)

2. The words: **أَنَا بِهِ زَعِيمٌ** (and I stand surety for it) appearing at the end of verse 72 tell us that one person can become the guarantor of financial rights on behalf of another person. The related ruling, according to the majority of Muslim jurists, provides that the creditor has the authority to recover his property from the person legally in debt, or from the guarantor, as he chooses. However, if it is recovered from the guarantor, the guarantor would have the right to recover from the person legally in debt whatever cash or property has been taken from him. (Qurṭubī)

3. The sentence: **كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا يُوسُفَ** (This is how We planned for Yūsuf) in verse 76 tells us that it is permissible, for a valid reason recognized by Sharī'ah, to change the form of a transaction in a way that it brings a change in its legal status. According to the terminology of the *fuqahā'* (jurists) it is called 'Ḥīlah Shar'īyyah' (i.e. a lawful device to avoid a real hardship). However, the condition is that such an action should not cause the invalidation of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. If so, all such devices are, by the consensus of Muslim jurists, Ḥarām and unlawful - for example, finding an excuse to avoid paying Zakāh, or to embark on an unnecessary journey before or during Ramādān simply to seek an excuse for not fasting. This is universally Ḥarām. The hunt for such excuses and devices has brought Divine punishment on some nations, and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has prohibited the use of such stratagems. The entire Muslim Ummah agrees that they are Ḥarām, forbidden and unlawful. Acting upon them does not go on to make whatever is done as permissible. In fact, what falls on the doer is a two-fold sin - firstly, that of the original impermissible act; secondly, that of the impermissible device which amounts, in a way, to cheating Allah and His Rasūl. That all such *ḥiyal* or stratagems are impermissible has been proved by Imām Al-Bukhārī in his Kitāb al-Ḥiyal.

Verses 77 - 82

قَالُوا إِنْ يَسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ فَأَسْرَهَا يَوْسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ
وَلَمْ يُوَدِّهَا لَهُمْ ۚ قَالَ أَنْتُمْ شَرُّ مَكَانًا ۚ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾
قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُ أَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا فَخُذْ أَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهُ ۚ إِنَّا
نَرُوكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَنْ نَأْخُذَ إِلَّا مَنْ وَجَدْنَا
مَتَاعًا عِنْدَهُ ۚ إِنَّا إِذَا ظَلَمْنَا لَنَا ۚ فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْسَسُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا
نَجِيًّا ۚ قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ أَبَاكُمْ قَدْ أَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَوْثِقًا مِنَ
اللَّهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطْتُمْ فِي يُوسُفَ ۚ فَلَنْ أَبْرَحَ الْأَرْضَ حَتَّى يَأْذَنَ
لِيَ أَبِي أَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ لِي ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ ارْجِعُوا إِلَى
أَبَائِكُمْ فَقُولُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّ ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ ۚ وَمَا شَهِدْنَا إِلَّا بِمَا عَلَّمَنَا وَمَا
كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حَافِظِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَسَأَلَ الْقَرِيَّةَ الَّتِي كُنَّا فِيهَا وَالْعِيرَ الَّتِي
أَقْبَلْنَا فِيهَا ۚ وَأَنَا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

They said, "If he commits theft, then, a brother of his has committed theft before." So Yūsuf kept it (his reaction) to himself and did not reveal it to them. He said, "You are even worse in position. And Allah knows best of what you allege." [77] They said, "O 'Azīz, he has a father, a very old man. So, take one of us in his place. We see you are a generous man." [78] He said, "God forbid that we keep anyone except the one with whom we have found our thing, otherwise we shall be unjust." [79]

So when they lost hope in him, they went aside for consultation. The oldest of them said, "Do you not know that your father has taken pledge from you in the name of Allah, while you had defaulted earlier in the case of Yūsuf. So, I shall never leave this land unless my father permits me or Allah decides about me. And He is the best of all judges. [80] Go back to your father and say, 'Our father, your son has committed theft, and we do not testify except what we know, and we could not guard against the unseen. [81] And ask (the people of) the town

in which we have been and the caravan with which we have come, and surely we are truthful." [82]

Commentary

It was stated in the previous verses that, while in Egypt, a royal bowl was concealed in the baggage of Benjamin, the younger brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Then, by recovering it as planned, a charge of theft was levelled against him.

As in the first of the verses cited above, when the stolen property was recovered from Benjamin's baggage before the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, they were so ashamed that they said in irritation: **إِنْ يَسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ**, that is, if he has committed a theft, it is not much of a surprise, for he had a brother who, like him, had committed a theft before. The sense was that he was not their real brother. He was their step brother. And he had a real brother who had also committed a theft.

On this occasion, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام accused him too of a theft, which refers to an event which took place during his childhood when the way a conspiracy was hatched here to blame Benjamin for theft, a similar conspiracy was staged against Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام at that time with him being totally unaware of it. As for his brothers, they were fully aware of the fact that he was totally free from this blame. But, being angry with Benjamin on this occasion, they have made out that event too as of theft and have put its blame on his brother, Yūsuf.

What was that event? Reports differ about it. Referring to Muḥammad ibn Ishāq and Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, Ibn Kathīr has reported that soon after the birth of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Benjamin was born. This birth of his became the cause of his mother's death. When both Yūsuf and Benjamin were left without their mother, they were raised by their paternal aunt. Allah Ta'ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from his very childhood with such an attractive personality that whoever saw him became deeply attached to him. His paternal aunt was no exception. She would not let him disappear from her sight at any time. On the other hand, no different was the condition of his father who was very fond of him. But, being a minor child, it was necessary that he be kept under the care of a woman. Therefore, he was put under the care of his

paternal aunt. When he had learnt how to walk, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام thought of having him come to live with him. When he talked to his paternal aunt, she showed her reluctance to let him go. After that, having been under compulsion, she somehow handed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام over to his father, but she did make a plan to take him back. She had an antique waist-band which had come to her as the legacy of Sayyidna Ishāq عليه السلام and was highly valued. Sayyidna Yūsuf's paternal aunt tied this band on his waist underneath his dress.

After he had gone, she spread the news around that her waist-band has been stolen by someone. When searched for, it turned out to be with young Yūsuf. According to the Sharī'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, the paternal aunt now had the right to keep him as her slave. When Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام saw that the paternal aunt has become the owner of Yūsuf on the authority of the religious law of the land, he handed young Yūsuf over to her. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام kept living with her as long as she was alive.

This was the event in which the blame of theft was imputed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام following which the truth came to light and everybody found that he was free of even the least doubt of theft. It was the love of his paternal aunt for him that had made her conspire to keep him. The brothers knew this truth all too well. Given this reason, it did not behove them that they would attribute theft to him. But, of the series of excesses inflicted on Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام by his brothers, this too was the last.

Now in the second sentence of the first verse (77) it was said: فَاسْرَهَا يُوْسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَلَمْ يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام heard what his brothers had to say and kept it in his heart for they still seemed to be after him and were now blaming him for theft. But, he kept his reaction to himself and did not let his brothers know that he had heard what they had said and was affected by it in any way.

Said in the next and last sentence of the verse was: قَالَ أَنْتُمْ شَرُّ مَكَانَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ , that is, 'Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said (in his heart): 'You are even worse in position (as you accuse your brother of theft, falsely and knowingly). And Allah knows best of what you allege (whether what you are saying is true or false).' The first sentence has been uttered in the heart. The other sentence may possibly have been said publicly as his re-

sponse to what his brothers had said.

In verse 78, it was said: قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُ أَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا فَخُذْ أَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهُ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ It means when the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) realized that nothing seems to be working here and they have no option left but to leave Benjamin behind, they started flattering the 'Azīz of Miṣr. They told him that Benjamin's father was very old and weak (his separation will be unbearable for him). Therefore, they requested him that he should detain anyone from among them, in lieu of him. They also told him that they were making that request to him in the hope that he, as they feel, appears to be a very generous person - or, he has been generous to them earlier too.

The response of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) appears in verse 79 as: قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَن نَأْخُذَ إِلَّا مَنْ وَجَدْنَا مَتَاعًا عِنْدَهُ إِنَّا إِذَا ظَلَمُونَ that is, he gave his reply to their request according to the regulations followed in his country by telling them that they were not authorized to detain anyone they wished. In fact, if they were to arrest someone other than the person from whose possession the lost property has been recovered, then, according to their own *fatwā* and ruling, they would be accused of being unjust.

The reason he gave was that they had themselves said that 'he, in whose baggage the stolen property is found, shall himself be the punishment.'

In verse 80, it was said: فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْسَسُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا نَجِيًّا (So when they lost hope in him, they went aside for consultation).

After that, the primary statement of the oldest brother which begins with the words: قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ (The oldest of them said) is continued till the end of verse 80. The statement was: "Do you not know that your father had taken pledge from you in the name of Allah, while you had defaulted earlier in the case of Yūsuf. So, I shall never leave this land unless my father permits me (to return) or Allah decides about me. And He is the best of all judges."

This is the statement of the oldest brother. Some commentators identify him as being Yahūda (Judah) - and he was, though not the oldest in age, but was certainly the eldest in knowledge and merit. Other commentators say that he is Ruebel (Rueben) who is the oldest in age and he

was the one who had suggested that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام should not be killed. Still others have said that this oldest brother was Shamūn who was known to be the eldest in power and rank.

Then, in verse 81, it was said: *إِرْجِعُوا إِلَىٰ آبَائِكُمْ*, that is, the oldest brother said: I am going to stay here. You all go back to your father and tell him that his son has committed a theft, and that whatever we are saying is what we have seen with our own eyes, and that the stolen property was recovered from his baggage before us.

As for the last sentence of verse 81: *وَمَا كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حَافِظِينَ* (and we could not guard against the unseen), it means that 'the pledge we had given to you to bring back Benjamin definitely was given in terms of outwardly visible circumstances. We did not know what we did not see and control - thus how could we know that he would steal and be arrested for it leaving us helpless in this matter.' The sentence could also mean that 'we did our best to keep Benjamin protected seeing that he does nothing which would put him in trouble. But, this effort of ours could be within the limits of our outwardly visible circumstances. That this thing would happen to him, in absence of our vigilance and knowledge, was something we did not know about.'

Since the brothers of Yūsuf had deceived their father earlier, and knew that their father would never be satisfied with their statement mentioned above, and he would never believe in what they would tell him, therefore, for additional emphasis, they said: '(and if you do not believe us), you can check with the people of the town in which we have been (that is, the city in Egypt). And you can also check with the caravan which has come from Egypt to Can'aan with us. And we are true in what we are saying.'

At this point, the question - why would Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام bear by such a heartless treatment with his father - reappears in Tafsīr Maẓharī. This question has also been taken up earlier in our comments on this Sūrah where it has been said that it was surprising that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not tell his father about himself, then detained his brother too, then his brothers made repeated visits to Egypt and he never told them about himself nor sent some message to his father. Tafsīr Maẓharī answers all these doubts by saying:

إِنَّهُ عَمِلَ ذَلِكَ بِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى لِيَزِيدَ فِي بَلَاءِ يَعْقُوبَ

That is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) did that with the command of Allah Ta'ālā so that (the cycle of) the test and trial of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) reaches its completion.

Rules and Principles

1. The statement: وَمَا شَهِدْنَا إِلَّا بِمَا عَلِمْنَا (and we do not testify except what we know) appearing in verse 82 proves that human transactions and contracts are based on apparently known circumstances. They do not cover things which no one knows. The pledge to protect Benyamin which the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) had given to their father was related to things which were in their control. As for the incident that he was accused of theft and arrested for it, it was a different matter which does not affect the pledge as such.

2. Deduced from the same verse, there is another ruling which appears in Tafsīr al-Qurtubī. It says: This sentence proves that testimony depends on knowledge. No matter how this knowledge is acquired, testimony can be given in accordance with it. Therefore, the way an event can be testified by having seen it with one's own eyes, similarly, it can be testified by having heard it from someone reliable and worthy of trust - subject to the condition that he does not conceal the truth of the matter, instead, states plainly that he has not seen it personally but has heard it from such and such reliable person. It is on the basis of this principle that Malikī jurists have ruled the testimony of a blind person as permissible.

3. The present verses also prove that should a person be true, right and proper, but the situation is such that others may suspect him to be otherwise, then, he must remove that shadow of doubt so that those who see him do not fall into the sin of (unwarranted) suspicion - as in this event relating to Benyamin, there came up an occasion of accusation and doubt because of a past event in the life of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام). Therefore, in order to make things clear, the testimony of the people of the city, and the caravan, was presented in support.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, by his personal conduct, affirmed it positively. On his way back from his Masjid, when he was going through an alley with Ummul-Mu'minīn, Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah (رضي الله عنها),

he noticed two persons appearing at the head of the alley. They were still at some distance, but the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم told them that he was with Ṣafiyyah bint Ḥuyayy. They said: Yā Rasūl Allah, can anyone have any suspicion about you? Then, he said: Yes, the Shayṭān keeps seeping through the human body, may be it drops a doubt in somebody's heart. (Al-Bukhārī and Muslim) [Qurṭubī]

Verses 83 - 87

قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْراً ۖ فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ ۖ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعاً ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَأْسَفَى عَلَى يُونُسَ ۖ وَأَيُّضْتُ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحُزَنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ﴿٨٤﴾ قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ تَفْتَوُا تَذَكَّرُ يُونُسَ ۖ حَتَّى تَكُونَ حَرَضًا أَوْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْهَالِكِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بَثِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ ۖ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾ يَبْنِي أَدْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِنْ يُونُسَ ۖ وَأَخِيهِ وَلَا تَأْيِسُوا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْيِسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

He (Ya'qūb) said, "Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best. Hopefully, Allah may bring them all together. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, All-Wise." [83]

And he turned away from them and said, "How sad I am about Yūsuf" and his eyes turned white with sorrow and he was suppressing (his anger and grief). [84] They said, "By God, you will not stop remembering Yūsuf until you collapse or perish." [85] He said, "I complain of my anguish and sorrow to none but Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know. [86] O my sons, go and search for Yūsuf and his brother, and do not lose hope in the mercy of Allah. In fact, only the infidels lose hope in the mercy of Allah." [87]

Commentary

After the detention of young Benjamin in Egypt, his brothers re-

turned home and told Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام about what had happened there. They tried to assure him that they were telling the truth which can be confirmed from the people in Egypt, as well as, from the caravan they came with from Egypt to Can'aan. From the later, he could also ascertain that Benjamin's theft was apprehended and he was arrested for it. Since Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام knew that they had lied to him earlier in the case of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, therefore, he could not believe them this time too - though, in fact, this time they had told him no lie. And therefore, on this occasion as well, he said the same thing he had said at the time of the disappearance of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: **بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ**: **أَمْ رَاطُ قَصِيرٌ جَمِيلٌ** ("Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best), that is, this statement of yours is not correct. You have made it up yourself. But, even now, it is patience I choose to observe. Only that would be the best for me.'

From this Al-Qurtubī has deduced: In whatever a Mujtahid says with his Ijtihād, there can be an error as well, so much so that it is possible that a prophet too, when he says something on the basis of his own Ijtihād, could make an error - though, only initially. This is what happened in this case when he declared the truth of his sons to be a lie. But, prophets have a special status and a personal exclusivity on the basis of which they are alerted over the mistake by the will of Allah, and removed away from it, and finally they find truth.

Here, it is also possible that by his comment about 'manuvering something' mentioned above Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام intended to refer to what was made up in Egypt whereby Benjamin was arrested under a false charge of theft only to achieve a particular purpose, and the ultimate result of which was to unfold later in a better form. There may, as well, be a hint toward it in the next sentence of this verse where it is said: **عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا** (Hopefully, Allah may bring them all together).

In short, the outcome of the refusal of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام to accept the statement of his sons this time was that there was no theft really, nor was Benjamin arrested, and the truth of the matter was to be found elsewhere. This was true in its place. But, whatever was said by his sons, as they knew it, was not wrong either.

Said in verse 84 was: **وَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَاسْفَى عَلَى يُوسُفَ وَأَيُّضْتُ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْخُزْنِ فَهَوَ**

كَظِيمٌ : 'And he turned away from them and said, "How sad I am about Yusuf" and his eyes turned white with sorrow and he was suppressing (his anger and grief).' It means that, after this second shock, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام closed this chapter of talking to his sons about this matter, and turned to his Lord with his plaint before Him as to how sad he was about Yūsuf. What happened was that this constant crying at his separation from Yusuf caused his eyes to turn white from sorrow. The sense is that he lost his eyesight, or it became very weak. Tafsīr authority, Muqātil has said that this state of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام continued for six years when his eyesight had nearly gone. In the last sentence of the verse, it was said: فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ which can be explained by saying that he became silent, speechless, unable to share his pain with anyone else. The word: كَظِيمٌ (*kazīm*) has been derived from: كَظَمَ (*kazm*) which means to be choked up or filled. Thus, the sense would be that his heart was all filled up with sorrow and his tongue was tied for he would not talk about his grief to anyone.

Therefore, the word: كَظَمَ (*kazm*) is also taken in the sense of suppressing anger - in a way that anger, despite having one's heart filled with it, does not become the motivating factor of doing something, by word of mouth or movement of hand, as demanded by one's anger. It appears in Ḥadīth:

وَمَنْ يَكْظِمُ الْغَيْظَ يَأْجُرْهُ اللَّهُ

That is, 'whoever suppresses his anger (and does not act as it demands despite having the ability to do so), Allah will reward him.'

It is said in another Ḥadīth that, on the day of Resurrection (Al-Ḥashr), Allah Ta'ālā will bring such people before the whole multitude of people and would give them the option to take whichever of the blessings of Jannah (Paradise) they liked.

At this point, Imām Ibn Jarīr has reported a Ḥadīth according to which, at a time of distress, reciting or prompting to recite: اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّا اِلَيْهِ رَجِعُونَ (*Innā lil-lāhi wa innā ilaihi rāji'ūn* : To Allah we belong and to Him we are to return) is one of the distinguishing characteristics of this Ummah, and this Kalimah is highly effective in delivering one from the suffering of sorrow. We can understand why it has been called the distin-

guishing characteristic of the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ since Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام), when choked with deadly sorrow and shock, did not say this Kalimah, instead, he said: **يَاسُفَى عَلَى يُونُسَ** (How sad I am about Yūsuf). In his Shu'abul-Īmān, Al-Baihaqī has also reported this Ḥadīth as based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه).

Why Was Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) So Deeply Attached To Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) ?

At this stage, we notice that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) had extraordinary love for Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام). He was so affected by his disappearance that, during this whole period of his separation from him which has been reported to be forty years in some narrations while eighty in some others, he kept weeping continuously, so much so that he lost his eyesight. Apparently, this does not measure upto his spiritual majesty as a prophet that he would love his children so much and that much. On the other hand, the Holy Qur'ān says: **إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ**: 'Your wealth and your children are a *fitnah* (trial) - 64:15.' And, as for the spiritual majesty of the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, the Holy Qur'ān has this to say: **إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذَكَرَى الدَّارِ**: that is, 'We have made them special to specialize in the remembrance of the Home (of 'Ākhirah) - 38:46.' Mālik ibn Dīnār رحمه الله تعالى explains its meaning by saying that: We have taken out the love of *dunyā* from their hearts and, in its place, We have filled their hearts with nothing but the love of 'Ākhirah. Their only criterion, in taking or leaving something, is 'Ākhirah.

From the sum-total of what has been said here, there rises a difficulty before us as to how could Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) allow himself to be so consumed with his love for Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام), and how could that be explained as correct.

In his Tafsīr (Mazharī), Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānīpatī رحمه الله تعالى has, with reference to this difficulty, reported a special research of Ḥaḍrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī, the gist of which is that, no doubt, the love of *dunyā* and its enjoyment is blameworthy. Categorical statements of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth prove that. But, the love of things of *dunyā* which relate to 'Ākhirah is, in reality, included under the love of 'Ākhirah. The excellences of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) were not limited to his physical beauty alone. Also to be taken into account are his prophetic chastity and high morals. So, given an over-all view, love for him was not the love of what worldly life

has to offer. In fact and in reality, this was nothing but the love for 'Akhi-rah itself.

In the comment quoted above, it is worth noticing that this love, though not the love of *dunyā* really, yet it did have a certain worldly touch. For this reason, this love became the source of the trial and test of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, for which he had to undergo the unbearable shock of a forty-year separation from him. Then, the chains of this event, from the beginning to the end, show that things kept taking shape as determined by Allah Ta'ālā which made this shock stretch longer and longer. Otherwise, at the very start of the event, it would have not been possible for a father who loved his son so intensely that he would simply listen to what his other sons told him and elect to keep sitting home and not do anything about it. In fact, if he had immediately visited the site of the incident and made necessary inquiries and investigations, he would have known the truth of the matter on the spot. But, things happened in a way as Allah would have them, so it just did not occur to him. After that, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was stopped, through revelation, from sending to his father any news about himself - to the limit that he took no initiative in this direction even after his ascension to power in Egypt. Then, more trying were events which happened concerning the repeated visits of his brothers to Egypt. Even at that time, he said nothing to his brothers about himself, nor did he try to send some note of information to his father. Instead of doing all that, he detained yet another brother through a secret plan, thus inflicting yet another shock on his father. All these actions cannot possibly issue forth from a great prophet such as Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام unless and until he had not been prohibited from doing so through the medium of Waḥy (revelation). Therefore, al-Qurṭubī and other commentators have declared this entire range of actions taken by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام as directly prompted by Divine revelation. The Qur'ānic statement: كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا يُوسُفَ (This is how We planned for Yūsuf - 76) also indicates in this direction. Allah knows best.

When the sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام saw the extreme suffering and patience of their father, they said: قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ تَفْتَأُ تَذْكُرُ يُوسُفَ (By God, you will not stop remembering Yūsuf ...), meaning thereby that every shock ends, after all, and so does every sorrow. The passage of days in life makes one forget them. But, he continues to be where he was, even after

the passage of such a long time with his sorrow being as fresh as when it came.

After hearing the concern of his sons, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb said: **إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بِنِيِّ وَيُّوْسُفَ وَخِزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ**, that is, 'I complain of my anguish and sorrow, not to you, or to anyone else, but to Allah *jalla thana'uh* Himself. Therefore, leave me alone as I am.' And, along with what he said, he also indicated that 'this remembrance of his will not go to waste for he knew from Allah Ta'ālā what they did not know - that he has been promised by Him that He would bring them all together with him.'

Verse 87 begins with the order given by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb **يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا اذْهَبُوْا فَتَحْسَبُوْا مِنْ يُّوسُفَ وَآخِيْهِ** (O my sons, go and search for Yūsuf and his brother ...).

It was after the passage of such a long time that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb **الْعَلِيْزَ** asked his sons to 'go and search for Yūsuf and his brother' - and not to lose hope in finding them. Before this, he had never given an order of this nature. All these things were subservient to the Divine destiny. Meeting them earlier than that was not so destined. Therefore, no such action was taken either. And now, the time to meet had arrived. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā put in his heart the way-out appropriate to it.

And the direction in which the search was to be made was turned towards nowhere but Egypt itself - which was known and definite in the case of Benjamin. But, there was no obvious reason, given the outward conditions, to look for Sayyidnā Yūsuf **الْعَلِيْزَ** in Egypt. But, when Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He arranges to put together appropriate causes for its execution. Therefore, this time, he instructed his sons to go to Egypt once again for the purpose of this search. Some commentators have said that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb **الْعَلِيْزَ**, by noticing that the 'Azīz of Miṣr had treated them unusually the first time when he had returned their capital by putting it within their baggage, had got the idea that this 'Azīz seems to be someone very noble and generous, perhaps he may be Yūsuf himself.

Points of Guidance

Patience in Pain is Obligatory on Every Muslim

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said: The event relating to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb

ﷺ proves that it is Wājib on every Muslim when faced with distress or pain in the case of his person, children, family or property that he or she should seek redress from it by resorting to patience (ṣabr) at its best and by becoming resigned to and content with the decree of Allah Ta'ālā - and follow the example of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ and other blessed prophets.

The Merit of Swallowing Anger and Pain

Imām Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى has said: Out of what one swallows, two are the best in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā: (1) To do Ṣabr on pain or distress, and (2) to swallow anger.

Complaining of pain before everyone

In another Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: مَنْ بَثَّ لَمْ يَصْبِرْ, that is, one who goes about narrating his distress before everyone has not observed Ṣabr.

The Reward for Ṣabr

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has said: Allah Ta'ālā conferred upon Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ the reward of Shuhadā' (martyrs in the way of Allah) for this Ṣabr. And, in this Ummah too, whoever observes Ṣabr while in distress shall receive a similar reward.

The Reason why Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ was put to Trial

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has given a reason for this severe trial and test of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ as it appears in some narrations. It is said that one day Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ was doing his Tahajjud prayers and Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was sleeping before him. All of a sudden a sound of snoring by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ caused his attention to be diverted to him. This happened twice, and thrice. Then, Allah Ta'ālā said to His angels: Look, this is My friend, and My favoured servant, see how he, in the middle of his address and approach to Me, turns his attention to someone other than Me. By My Honour and Power, I shall take these two eyes of his out, the eyes with which he has turned his attention to someone other than Me, and the one to whom he has turned his attention, I shall separate from him for a long time.

How About Looking at Someone During Ṣalāh?

Therefore, in a Ḥadīth of Al-Bukhārī narrated by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ؓ, it appears that she asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'How is it to look else-

where during Ṣalāh?' In reply, he said: 'Through it, the Shayṭān snatches the Ṣalāh of a servant of Allah away from him.' May Allah *subḥānahū wa Ta'ālā* keep us protected.

Verses 88 - 92

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ
مُزْجَجَةٍ فَأَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾
قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَافَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ جَاهِلُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾
قَالُوا إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ يُوسُفُ ۚ قَالَ أَنَا يُوسُفُ وَهَذَا أَخِي ۖ قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ
عَلَيْنَا ۚ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾
قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ أَتَرَكْنَا اللَّهَ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنْ كُنَّا لَخَطِئِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ قَالَ لَا تَثْرِبَ
عَلَيْكُمْ الْيَوْمَ ۚ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾

So, when they came to him (Yūsuf), they said, "O 'Azīz, distress has befallen us and our family, and we have brought a capital of very little worth. So, give us the full measure and be charitable to us. Surely, Allah rewards the charitable." [88] He said, "Do you know what you did to Yūsuf and his brother when you acted ignorant?" [89]

They said, "Are you really the Yūsuf?" He said, "I am Yūsuf, and this is my brother. Allah has been very kind to us. Surely, whoever fears Allah and observes patience, then Allah does not waste the reward of the good-doers." [90]

They said, "By God, Allah has given to you preference over us, and we were surely in error." [91]

He said, "No reproach upon you today. May Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of all the merciful." [92]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses appearing above is the remaining part of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and his brothers. It tells us that Sayyidnā Ya'qub عليه السلام asked his sons to go and search Yūsuf and his brother. So they travelled to Egypt for a third time - because they knew that Benya-

min was there and they had to try to get him released first. As for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, though his presence in Egypt was not known to them but, when the time comes for something to happen, human plans too start falling in place, unconsciously and without an intentional effort. This is confirmed by a Ḥadīth which says: When Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He makes its causes get together automatically. Therefore, to search Yūsuf too, the very travel to Egypt was appropriate, though taken up unconsciously. Then, they needed foodgrains, after all. And yet another factor was that they hoped to see the 'Azīz of Miṣr on the pretext of their request for foodgrains, when they could put forward their plea for the release of Benjamin.

The first verse (88) begins with the words: فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا (And when they came to him, they said...). It means: When the brothers of Yūsuf reached Egypt as ordered by their father and met the 'Azīz of Miṣr, they talked to him in a flattering tone. Presenting their need and helplessness, they told the 'Azīz that they and their family were suffering because of the famine, so much so that they did not have even adequate funds to purchase foodgrains. Compelled by circumstance, they had brought a capital which was not good enough for that purpose. Thus, their request was that, given his generosity, he should accept whatever they had and give them the full measure of grains as is usually given against things of good value. Not being their right in any way, they pleaded that the grains should be given to them as if given in charity because 'Allah rewards the charitable.'

What was this 'capital of very little worth'? The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have not clarified it. The sayings of the commentators differ. Some say that they were bad *dirhams* which were not acceptable in the open market. Others say that this comprised of household articles. This expression - 'capital of very little worth' - is a translation of the meaning of the word: مُرَجِيَةٌ (*'muzjātin'*) which really means something which does not move on its own, but has to be moved by someone else forcefully.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام heard these submissive words from his brothers and saw their broken-down condition, he was naturally coming to a point where he would have no option but to disclose the truth as it was. And the drift of events was showing that the restriction placed by Allah Ta'ālā on Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that he would not disclose the truth

of the matter about himself was not going to be there anymore for the time had come close when it would be taken back. Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, it has been reported in Tafsīr al-Qurtubī and Maḏharī that Sayyidnā Ya‘qūb عليه السلام had, on this occasion, sent a letter in writing and had addressed it to the ‘Azīz of Miṣr. The letter said:

"From Ya‘qūb Ṣafī Allah Ibn Ishāq Dhabīḥ Allah Ibn Ibrāhīm Khalīl Allah To the ‘Azīz of Miṣr. After offering praise to Allah: Our entire family is known for hardships and trials. My grandfather, Ibrāhīm Khalīl Allah was tested through the fire of Nimrud. Then, my father, Ishāq was put to a hard test. Then, I was tested through a son of mine whom I held very dear - to the limit that I lost my eyesight when separated from him. After that, there was his younger brother, a source of comfort for me in my grief, whom you arrested on a charge of theft. And let me tell you that we are the progeny of prophets. Never have we committed a theft, nor has there ever been a thief among our children. And peace on you!"

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام read this letter, he trembled and broke into tears and decided to let his secret out. To start with, he first asked his brothers if they remembered what they had done with Yūsuf and his brother at a time when they were ignorant, unable to distinguish between good and bad, and quite neglectful of acting with foresight.

When his brothers heard his question, they were dumbfounded. What has the ‘Azīz of Miṣr got to do with the story of Yūsuf? Then, they recollected the dream seen by young Yūsuf the interpretation of which was that he would achieve some high rank and they would have to bow down before him. Could it be that this ‘Azīz of Miṣr is none else but Yūsuf himself? Then, as they exerted and deliberated a little more, they recognized him by some signs. Still, to confirm it further, they asked him: **أَ أَنْتَ لَا تُؤْسَفُ** (Are you really the Yūsuf?). Then, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: ‘Yes, I am Yūsuf and this is my brother, Benyamin.’ He supplemented his statement by adding the name of his brother so that they become certain about him. In addition to that, he also wanted them to become sure right then about the total success of their mission, that is, the two they had started to search for were there before them, both at the same time and place. Then, he said: **قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ**, that is, ‘Allah has been very kind to us [that he first gave both of us two qualities, those of patience (Ṣabr) and the fear of Allah

(*Taqwā*), qualities which are a key to success and a security shield against every hardship. Then He changed hardship into comfort, separation into union, and our paucity of wealth and recognition into its total abundance. 'Surely, whoever fears Allah [and abstains from sins] and observes patience [while in distress], then Allah does not waste the reward of the good- doers [like these].'

Now the brothers of Yūsuf had no choice left with them but to confess the wrongs they had done and admit the grace and excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. So, in one voice, they all said: تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اٰتٰكَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَاِنْ كُنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ لَظٰلِمِيْنَ: 'By God, Allah has given to you preference over us [which you deserved], and we were surely in error [in whatever we did - and so, forgive us in the name of Allah].' To this in reply, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said what a prophet of his stature would say: لَا تَتْرِبْ عَلَيَّكُمْ (No reproach upon you), that is, 'not to say much about taking a revenge of your injustices against me, on this day, I would not even blame you for it.' This much was the good news of forgiveness from his side which he let them hear. Then, he prayed for them before Allah Ta'ālā: يَغْفِرُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ۖ وَهُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيْمِيْنَ (May Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of all the merciful).

After that, he said: اِذْهَبْ اِلٰى اٰتَمِيصِيْ هٰذَا فَالْقُوْهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِ اَبِيْ يٰتَ بَصِيْرًا وَّاْتُوْنِيْ بِاَهْلِكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ: 'Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man [which will enable him to come here]. And bring to me all your family [so that all of us can get together, be happy, enjoy the blessings given by Allah and be grateful to Him].'

Points of Guidance

We come to know of many injunctions, rulings, as well as guidelines, which are good to have in life:

1. First of all, the use of the expression: تَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا ('*taṣaddaq 'alainā*': be charitable to us) in verse 88 raises a question as to how would Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity) become Ḥalāl (lawful) for the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who are the progeny of prophets? Secondly, even if Ṣadaqah could be taken as Ḥalāl, how would the act of asking for it become Ḥalāl? Even if the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were no prophets, he himself certainly was. Why did he not warn them against this error?

A clear enough answer to this is that the word Ṣadaqah used here does not mean the real Ṣadaqah. In fact, the request for a concession in

the transaction has been given the name of Ṣadaqah and Khairāt - because, they had just never asked for a free supply of grains. Instead, they had offered 'a capital of very little worth.' And the essence of their request was that this 'capital of very little worth' be accepted in the spirit of remission given in such hard circumstances. Moreover, it is also possible that the unlawfulness of Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity) for the progeny of prophets may be exclusive to the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - as held by Mujāhid from among Tafsīr authorities. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

2. The last sentence of verse 88: إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ (Surely, Allah rewards the charitable) tells us that Allah Ta'ālā gives good return to those who spend in Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity). But, there are details to it, that is, there is a general return for Ṣadaqah and Khairāt which is received by everyone, believer or disbeliever, right here in the present world. That return comes in the form of the removal of disasters and hardships. Then, there is the return which is particularly attached to the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter), that is, the Jannah (Paradise). That is for the believers only. Since the addressee here is the 'Azīz of Miṣr - and the brothers of Yūsuf did not know at that time whether or not he was a believer - therefore, they opted for a sentence which was general, and which included the return of the present world, as well as that of the Hereafter. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Besides, this being an address to the 'Azīz of Miṣr, the occasion obviously demanded that the address in this sentence should have been direct, as: 'Allah will give you the best of return.' But, as his being a believer was not known, therefore, the form of address used was general, and any special return for him was not mentioned. (Qurṭubī)

3. The sentence: قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا (Allah has been very kind to us) in verse 90 proves that, should one be in some distress or hardship, then, Allah Ta'ālā delivers one from these and showers him or her with his blessings, now, after that, such a person should not talk about his past hardships anymore. Instead, one should remember nothing but this blessing and favour of Allah Ta'ālā which one now has. After having been delivered from distress, and after having been blessed by Divine rewards, to continue crying over past hardships is ingratitude. Such an ungrateful person has been called: كَنُودٌ (*kanūd*) in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ (Truly, man is to his Lord, ungrateful - 100:6). The word, *kanūd*, refers to a person who does not remember favours received, but does remember hardships faced.

Therefore, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made no mention at this time of the hardships he had to undergo for a long time due to the actions of his brothers. Instead of that, he mentioned the blessings of Allah only.

4. The last sentence: إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ (Surely, whoever fears Allah and observes patience, then Allah does not waste the reward of the good-doers) in verse 90 tells us that Taqwā, that is, abstention from sins, and Ṣabr, that is, patience and fortitude, are two qualities which deliver one from every disaster and distress. The Holy Qur'ān has said at several places that a person's prosperity and success depend on these two qualities, for example: وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا , that is, 'if you keep patience and fear Allah, their cunning shall not harm you at all - 3:120.'

A surface view of the verse here may suggest that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is claiming to be God-fearing and patient in the sense that it was because of his Taqwā and Ṣabr that he was blessed with deliverance from difficulties and rewarded with high ranks. But, no one can claim Taqwā for himself. It is prohibited by definite statements in the Holy Qur'ān, for example: فَلَا تَزْكُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى (Therefore do not claim purity for yourself: He knows best who it is that guards against evil - 53:32). But, in reality, there is no claim here. Instead, this is a confession of the blessings and favours of Allah Ta'ālā, for He first gave him the Taufīq of Ṣabr and Taqwā and then, through it, came all blessings from Him.

The declaration: لَا تَنْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (No reproach upon you today) in verse 92 has been made from the highest level of good morals whereby the oppressor was not only forgiven, but spared from reproach too.

Verses 93 - 100

اَذْهَبُوا بِقَمِيصِي هَذَا فَاَلْقُوهُ عَلَى وَجْهِ أَبِي يَأْتِ بَصِيرًا ۚ وَاتُّوْنِ
بَاهْلِكُمْ اَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ قَالَ أَبُوهُمْ اِنِّى لَا جِدْ رِيحَ
يُوسُفَ لَوْلَا اَنْ تُفَنِّدُوْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾ قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ اِنَّكَ لَفِى ضَلٰلِكَ الْقَدِيْمِ
﴿٩٥﴾ فَلَمَّا اَنْ جَاءَ الْبَشِيرُ الْفُتٰى عَلَى وَجْهِهِ فَارْتَدَّ بَصِيرًا ۖ قَالَ اَلَمْ
اَقُلْ لَّكُمْ لَا اِنِّىْ اَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾ قَالُوا يَا اَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا

ذُنُوبَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾ قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ
الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٩٨﴾ فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ أَوَىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَبُوهُ وَقَالَ
ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَرَفَعَ أَبُوهُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ
وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا ۖ وَقَالَ يَأْتِبَ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُءْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ
جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا ۖ وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ
بِكُمْ مِنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ نَزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي ۖ إِنَّ رَبِّي
لَطِيفٌ لِمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man. And bring to me all your family." [93]

And when the caravan set out, their father said, "I sense the scent of Yūsuf if you do not take me to be senile." [94]

They said, "By God, you are still in your old fallacy!" [95]
So, when came the man with good news, he put it (the shirt) on his face, and he turned into a sighted man. He (Ya'qūb) said, "Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?" [96]

They said, 'Our father, pray to Allah to forgive us our sins. Surely, we have been wrong.' [97]

He said, "I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you. Surely, He is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [98]

Later, when they came to Yūsuf, he placed his parents near himself and said, "Enter Egypt, God willing, in peace." [99]

And he raised his parents up on the throne, and they all fell before him in prostration. And he said, "My father, here is the fulfillment of my early dream. My Lord has made it come true. He favoured me when he released me from the prison and brought you from the countryside after Satan had caused a rift between me and my brothers. Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise." [100]

Commentary

The previous verses about the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام have told us about the time when, by the will of Allah, it was appropriate for him to disclose his secret to his brothers. This he did. His brothers sought his forgiveness. He, not only that he forgave them, did not even choose to admonish them for what they had done to him in the past. In fact, he prayed to Allah Ta'ālā for them. Meeting his father was now his next concern. Given the conditions, he found it better that his father comes to him with the family. But, having come to know that his father had lost his eyesight as a result of his separation from him, that became his first concern. So, he said to his brothers: **ادْهَبُوا بِقَمِيصِي هَذَا فَأَلْقُوهُ عَلَى وَجْهِ أَبِي يَأْتِ بَصِيرًا** (Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man - 93). It is obvious that putting someone's shirt on the face of a person cannot become the physical cause of an eyesight to return. In fact, this was a miracle of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for he, by the will of Allah, knew that once his shirt was put over the face of his father, Allah Ta'ālā will give him his eyesight back.

Tafsīr authorities, Ḍaḥḥāk and Mujāhid have said that this was the inherent quality of that shirt because it was not like ordinary clothes. Instead, it was brought from Paradise for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام at the time when he was thrown into the fire naked by Nimrūd. Then, this apparel of Paradise remained preserved with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. After his death, it passed on to Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام. After his death, it came to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. In view of its status as a sacred legacy, he put it inside a tube, sealed it and made Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام wear it round his neck as a Ta'wīdh (spiritual charm) so that he remains safe against the evil eye. When the brothers of Yūsuf removed the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to deceive their father and he was thrown into the well without it, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn came, and opening the tube hanging round his neck, took this shirt out from it, and made Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام wear it. Since that time, it remained preserved with him. When needed again, it was Jibra'īl al-Amīn again who advised Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that this shirt was an apparel of Paradise. It had a unique property. If put over the face of a blind person, he becomes sighted. He asked him to send it to his father and he would become a sighted man.

The view of Ḥaḍrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī رحمه الله تعالى is that the beauty,

rather the very existence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, was itself a thing of the Paradise. Therefore, every shirt that touched his body could have this property. (Maẓharī)

Said in the last sentence of verse 93 was: **وَأْتُونِي بِأَهْلِكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ** that is, 'all of you, my brothers, bring your entire family to me.' Though, the real purpose was to have his respected father come to him but, here he did not specifically mention his father, instead, talked about bringing the family - perhaps, because he considered that asking his father to be brought to him was contrary to etiquette. However, he was already certain that the sight of his father would return and there would remain no reason which could stop him from coming to him, rather, he would himself want to honour him with his visit. According to a narration reported by Al-Qurtubī, Yahūdā (Judah) from among the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام offered to carry this shirt personally - because, it was he who had carried young Yūsuf's shirt smeared with fake blood and which brought many shocks for his father, and now, it should be him again who should carry the shirt in his own hands, so that amends could be made for past injustices.

Verse 94 opens with the words: **وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ** 'And when the caravan set out' (and had reached barely outside the limits of the city), then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said (to those around him): 'I sense the scent of Yūsuf if you do not take me to be senile.' According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه there was a travel distance of eight days from the city of Egypt to Can'aan, and according to Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضي الله عنه the distance was eighty *farsakh*, that is, nearly two hundred and fifty miles. Unique is the power of Allah Ta'ālā who, from such a distance, carried all the way to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, the scent of his son Yūsuf through the shirt of his son Yūsuf. And some thing of wonder it certainly is that this scent, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was sitting confined into a well of his own homeland, caused no reaction into the smell buds of his father! Right from here, we learn that no miracle is in the control of a prophet. In fact, a miracle is not even the personal act and action of the prophet. This is directly the act of Allah. When Allah Ta'ālā wills, He makes a miracle manifest itself. And when the Divine will is not there, the nearest of the near recedes into the farthest.

In verse 95, it was said: **قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلَالِكَ الْقَدِيمِ** (They said, 'By God, you are still in your old fallacy!'). It means that those around Sayyidnā

Ya'qūb عليه السلام commented on what he had said by wondering that he still seemed to be engrossed into his old fallacy, that is: 'Yūsuf is alive and we shall meet again.'

Said in verse 96 is: فَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَ الْبَشِيرُ that is, 'when this man with the good news reached Can'aan' and put the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام over the face of his father, his eyesight returned and he became a sighted man. The man who came with the good news was Yahūda, the same brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who had brought his shirt from Egypt.

The last sentence of the verse is: قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (He [Ya'qūb] said, 'Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?' - 96) - that Yūsuf is alive and we shall meet again.

Now, when the truth of the matter became clear, the brothers of Yūsuf asked for the forgiveness of their father in a spiritually endearing style by saying: قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ : 'Our father, pray to Allah to forgive us our sins. Surely, we have been wrong - 97.' Thus, it is obvious that a person who prays to Allah Ta'ālā for the forgiveness of their sins would do that himself too.

The reply given by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was: قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُكُمْ رَبِّي (I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you ... - 98).

Here, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has, instead of praying for them instantly, made a promise that he would pray for them soon. Commentators have generally given a reason for this. According to them, his purpose was to pray for them particularly, in peace and with concentration, towards the later part of the night - because the prayer made at that hour is answered specially. This is as it appears in a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that, in the last third part of every night, Allah Ta'ālā descends in all His Glory close to the firmament near the Earth, and proclaims: Is there someone who would pray to Me, and I would answer? Is there someone who would seek forgiveness from Me, and I would forgive?

About what has been said in the next verse: فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ (Later, when they came to Yūsuf ... - 99), it appears in some narrations that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had sent with his brothers this time a large supply of clothes and other articles of need all loaded on some two hundred camels, so

that the whole family could make good preparations in anticipation of their visit to Egypt. Thus, all set for the trip, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام and his entire family set out for Egypt, their number, according to one narration, was seventy two and, according to the other, it was comprised of ninety three men and women.

On the other side, when came the time for their arrival in Egypt, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and the people of Egypt came out of the city to receive them. With them came four thousand soldiers to present a guard of honour. When these guests reached Egypt and entered the home of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام he lodged his parents with him.

Here, the text refers to 'parents.' - though, the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died during his childhood, but after her death, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had married Layya, the sister of his late wife. She was, in her capacity as the maternal aunt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, almost like his own mother, and also as the married wife of his father, was deserving of being called as nothing but his mother.*

At the end of verse 99, the statement: وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِينَ (he said, 'Enter Egypt, God willing, in peace') means that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام asked all his family members to enter Egypt by the will of Allah and without any fear or restriction, the sense being that they were free from usual restrictions placed on travellers who enter another country.

Verse 100 opens with the words: وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (And he raised his parents up on the throne), that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had his parents sit with him on the royal throne.

After that it was said: وَحَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا (and they all fell before him in prostration).

*. This interpretation is according to the *riwāyah* where it has been said that the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died at the time of Benyāmin's birth. It is on this basis that the present text of the respected author, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, appears to be contradictory to the relevant text on page 38 of Volume V where the name of Sayyidnā Yūsuf's mother عليها السلام has been given as Rāhīl. But, in reality, there is no authentic *riwāyah* in this connection. *Isrā'īlī riwāyāt* do exist, but they too are contradictory. The author of *Rūh al-Ma'ānī* has himself said that the Jewish chroniclers do not subscribe to the view that the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died at the time of Benyāmin's birth. If this *riwāyah* is given credence, no doubt remains. Then, in this situation, by the words: وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ (And he raised his parents up on the throne - 100), the reference would be to the real mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr have opted for this as the weightier view. So, commenting on this, Ibn Kathīr has said: وظاهر القرآن (أي ام يوسف عليه السلام) وموت امه (أي ام يوسف) ولم يقم دليل على موت امه (أي ام يوسف عليه السلام) وظاهر القرآن - يدل على حياتها قال ابن جرير ولم يقم دليل على موت امه (أي ام يوسف عليه السلام) وظاهر القرآن - يدل على حياتها - Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī.

tration), that is, the parents, and all brothers did *sajdah* before Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that this prostration of gratitude was for Allah Ta‘ālā, and not for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Others have said that a *Sajdah* or *Sujūd* (prostration) as part of ‘*Ibādah* (worship) when done for anyone other than Allah has always been forbidden in the Shari‘ah of every prophet. But, the *Sajdah* of Ta‘zīm (veneration) was permissible in the religious codes of past prophets - which has been prohibited in the Shari‘ah of Islām on the basis that it is a source of *Shirk*. This is confirmed by Ḥadīth reports from Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that *Sajdah* (prostration) for anyone other than Allah is not Ḥalāl.

And when both his father and mother, and eleven of his brothers, prostrated before him simultaneously, he remembered the dream he had seen in his childhood, and he said: وَقَالَ يَأْتِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُءْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا : 'My father, here is the fulfillment of my early dream,' that 'the sun and the moon and eleven stars are prostrating to me,' and I am grateful that 'my Lord has made it come true.'

Rules and Points of Guidance

1. When his sons requested Sayyidnā Ya‘qub عليه السلام to pray to Allah for their forgiveness, he said, 'I shall (soon) pray to my Lord to forgive you.' He did not make that *du‘ā* instantly. He delayed it.

One of the reasons given by commentators for this delay is that he first wanted to check with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام whether or not he has forgiven them - because, unless the victim of injustice forgives, there is no forgiveness from Allah either. So, this being the state of affairs, the making of a prayer for forgiveness was not appropriate.

Pointed to here is a matter of sound principle - that no violation of the rights of the servants of Allah (*Ḥuqūq al-‘Ibād*) gets to be forgiven unless the holder of the right receives his right back, or forgives it - only verbal repentance for it is not enough.

2. According to a narration of Sufyān al-Thawrī رحمه الله تعالى, when Yahūdā brought in the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and put it over the face of his father, he asked: How is Yūsuf? Yahūdā told him that he was the king of Egypt. Sayyidnā Ya‘qub عليه السلام said: I am not asking if he is a

prince or a pauper. I am asking how is he in his faith and deed. Then he told him about the qualities of his character and how God-fearing and chaste in conduct he was. This is how the noble prophets love and relate to their children. They are more concerned about the state of their spiritual life than they are with the state of their physical comfort. This is the model every Muslim should follow.

3. According to Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan رحمه الله تعالى, when the carrier of the good news arrived with the shirt of his separated son, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام wished to give him something in reward. But, life was hard, therefore, he apologized that there was no bread baked in the house for seven days and he could not give a material reward. However, he prayed that Allah Ta'ālā makes the agony of death easy on him. Al-Qurṭubī has said that this prayer was the best reward for him.

4. This event also tells us that the giving of a reward to someone who brings a good news is a practice of the blessed prophets. An event relating to Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Malīk رضي الله عنه from among the noble Ṣaḥābah is well known. He had not participated in the battle of Tabūk for which he was reproached and punished - though his repentance was later accepted. When the man with the good news of this acceptance came to him, he gave the dress he was wearing to him.

In addition to that, it also proves that inviting friends over meals on occasions of happiness is Sunnah. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه when he completed his reading of Sūrah al-Baqarah, shared his happiness with others by inviting them to eat with him for which he slaughtered a camel.

5. The sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, once the truth had come out in the open, asked for the forgiveness of their father and brother. This tells us that a person who has caused pain to someone, by word or action, or remains responsible for returning any right owed to him, then, it is obligatory on that person that he must pay back that right immediately, or have it forgiven by him.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه there is a report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A person who has someone's financial right due against him, or may have caused pain to him, by word or action, then, he must pay it back today, or get it off

his shoulders by seeking forgiveness - before comes the day of Qiyāmah where no one would have any property or wealth from which rights could be paid back. Therefore, his good deeds will be given to the victim of injustice and he will be left empty-handed. And if, he has no good deeds in his account, the sins of the other person will be put on his shoulders. May Allah protect us all from this.

Patience and Gratitude :

The Dignified Station of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام

To pick up the thread of the story, we see that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام starts telling his parents things which happened to him. This is a point where it would be useful to stop for a while and think. Had someone in our day been subjected to go through all those hardships which were faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and had he been enabled to meet his parents after such a long trial of separation and disappointment, just imagine where would he begin his tale of woes, how would he cry and make others do the same, and how many days and nights would he spend in recounting the hardships faced by him? But, the two parties, the teller and the listener, are both no less than two messengers and prophets of Allah. Worth observing is their conduct in this matter. Here is the very dear separated son of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, when he meets his father after having gone through the long period of so many hardships, see what he says:

وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُم مِّنَ الْبَدْوِ مِن بَعْدِ أَنْ نَزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ
بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي

He favoured me when He released me from the prison and brought you from the countryside after the Satan had caused a rift between me and my brothers - 100.

The hardships faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام can be divided over three stages respectively: (1) The injustices of his brothers; (2) the separation from his parents; (3) the pain of the prison. What this great prophet of Allah has done is that, in his statement, he has changed the order of events as they had happened. He started from the prison. Then, he said nothing about how he had entered the prison and how he had suffered there. Rather, talked about how he was released from the prison and mentioned that too with words of gratitude for Allah Ta'ālā. As a corollary of his release from the prison and his gratitude to Allah for it, he

also told them that he has been in the prison for a certain time.

Worth noticing here is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has mentioned his release from the prison. But, he has not said anything about the prison of the well in which his brothers had thrown him. He did not mention it even functionally, as in 'He released me from the prison - 100.' The reason is that he had already forgiven the mistake made by his brothers, and had said: لَا تَرْبُحَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (No reproach upon you today - 92). Therefore, he did not consider it proper to mention the incident of the well in any form whatsoever, so that his brothers may not be put to shame. (Qurtubī)

After that, he was supposed to dwell on the long and trying separation from his parents, and talk about how they had affected him. But, he set all these things aside. He took up the last part of it and mentioned his meeting with the parents and said so by thanking Allah for it: 'and brought you from the countryside (*al-badw*)' to this city of Egypt. There is a hint here to the blessing of Allah that He brought Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام from his home in the countryside, where conveniences of living are scarce, to a city with royal honours.

The first stage of the trials of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has not been mentioned yet. This concerns the injustices inflicted by his brothers on him. It is interesting that he sweeps the whole thing away as a handiwork of Satan and makes things come easy even by suggesting that his brothers were not of the kind who would do something like that. It was Satan who deceived them and caused this rift between them.

This is the elegance of prophets. Not only that they would be patient against pain and hardship, but that they would invariably find the occasion to be grateful to Allah under all conditions. Therefore, with prophets, there is no state of being in which they are not grateful to Allah Ta'ālā. This is contrary to what ordinary human beings would do. In their state of being, they would have thousands of blessings of Allah Ta'ālā being showered over them, yet they would not talk about them to anyone. And when they have some hardship overtake them at some time, they would go about crying over it all their lives. The Qur'ān has complained about this human mind-set when it says: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ (that is, human beings are, to their Rabb, very ungrateful -100:6).

After having reduced the tale of his trials in three words, Sayyidnā

Yūsuf عليه السلام said: رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise - 12:100).

Verse 101

رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۚ فَاطِرَ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا
وَالْحَقِّنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٠١﴾

My Lord, You have given me some power to rule and a knowledge of interpreting events. O the Creator of the heavens and the Earth, You are my guardian in this world and the Hereafter. Make me die a Muslim and make me join the righteous." [101]

Commentary

The address of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in the previous verses was to his respected father. Now, after having achieved an important objective by meeting his parents and brothers, he was at peace to devote himself directly to praising Allah Ta'ālā and to supplicating before Him. What he said appears immediately above. The 'ṣāliḥīn' or 'the righteous' or morally the most perfect servants of Allah can be the prophets themselves for they are Divinely protected (*ma'sūm*) against all sins. (Maẓharī)

Worth noticing in this *du'ā'* is the prayer for a good end to life. It presents before us a profile of the typical servants of Allah who have the honour of being accepted in the sight of their Creator. Their attitude is that they may be enjoying the highest possible ranks in this world and in the Hereafter, and they may have all sorts of power and office beneath their feet, yet, they would never wax proud over these. In fact, they keep fearing lest such things around them may be taken away or cut down. So, they keep praying that the physical and spiritual blessings given to them by Allah Ta'ālā continue to be with them, even keep increasing, right through the hour of death.

At this stage, the unusual story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and the subsequent chain of instructions and lessons, as mentioned in the Qur'ān,

has reached its completion. What happened after that has not been reported in the Holy Qur'ān, or in any Marfū' Ḥadīth (with its chain of reporting authorities ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself). Most commentators have reported that with reference to historical or Isra'īlī narrations.

Based on a narration by Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan 'رحمه الله تعالى', it has been reported in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was seven years old when his brothers had thrown him into a well. Then, he remained separated from his father for eighty years, remained alive for twenty three years after having met his parents, and died at the age of one hundred and twenty years.

As in the narrations of the People of the Book, reports Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, the period of separation between Sayyidnā Ya'qūb and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليهما السلام was forty years. Then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, after his arrival in Egypt, lived in the company of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for seventeen years. After that, he died.

As in the annals of historians, reports the author of Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام died after having lived for twenty four years in Egypt. Before his death, he ordered Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that his body should be sent to his home country and that he be buried by the side of his father, Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام.

Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رحمه الله has said that the body of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was placed in a coffin made of wood from saul tree and taken to Baytul-Maqdis. For this reason, it became common custom among Jews that they would take their dead from far away places to Baytul-Maqdis for a burial there. The age of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was one hundred and forty seven years when he died.

When Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام entered Egypt with his family, says Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رحمه الله, they were a total of ninety three men and women - and when this progeny of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, that is, the Banī Isra'īl, left Egypt with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, their number was six hundred and seventy thousand.¹ (Qurṭubī & Ibn Kathīr)

1. As pointed out earlier, this is based on Israelite narrations. Ibn Khaldūn, the well-known Muslim historian, has criticized this narration in his Muqaddimah and has urged that the number of Banī Isra'īl was not that big - (Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī)

It has been mentioned earlier that, after the death of the former ‘Azīz of Miṣr, the king of Egypt had arranged the marriage of Zulaikhā with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

It appears in the Torah and in the historical accounts of the People of the Book that they had two sons, Ifrā’īm and Manshā, and a girl, Raḥma bint Yūsuf. Raḥma was married to Sayyidnā Ayyub عليه السلام. Of the progeny of Ifrā’īm, there was Yusha’ ibn Nūn عليه السلام who was a companion of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام (Maḏharī)

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام died at the age of one hundred and twenty years and he was buried by the bank of the river Nile.

Based on a narration by Sayyidnā ‘Urwah ibn Zubayr رحمه الله تعالى, Ibn Ishāq has reported: When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was commanded to leave Egypt with the Banī Isrā’īl, it was revealed to him that he should not leave the body of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in Egypt and he was ordered to take it with him to Syria and bury him close to his ancestors. In obedience to this order, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام made investigations and succeeded in locating his burial place. He found his body in a marble coffin which he took with him to Can’aan in Palestine. There he buried him beside Sayyidnā Ishāq and Sayyidnā Ya’qūb عليه السلام. (Maḏharī)

After Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the Amalkites took over Egypt as the new Pharaohs. As for the Banī Isrā’īl, they lived under them but kept adhering to the Faith of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. However, they were taken as foreigners and subjected to all sorts of painful discriminations. Finally, Allah Ta’ālā delivered them from this punishment through Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. (Tafsīr Maḏharī)

Rules and Points of Guidance

1. From the previous verses (99-100), we learn that paying due respect to parents is obligatory (*wājib*) - as it stands proved from what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did.

2. We also learn from here that a prostration of reverence was permissible in the religious code of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which is why his parents and brothers prostrated to him. But, in the Shari’ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, this Sajdah or Sujūd has been declared as a particular mark of ‘Tbādah (worship) and it cannot be done before anyone other than Al-

lah. If done, it is Ḥarām. The Holy Qur'an has said: لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ (prostrate not to the Sun and the Moon ... - 41:37). And in Ḥadīth, it is said that Sayyidnā Mu'adh رضي الله عنه, when he went to Syria, saw local Christians prostrating to their parents. After his return from there, he started making a prostration before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He asked him not to do that. He said: If I were to take prostration before anyone as permissible, I would have told a wife to prostrate before her husband. Similarly, when Sayyidnā Salmān al-Farīsī رضي الله عنه wished to prostrate to him, he said:

لَا تَسْجُدْ لِي يَا سَلْمَانَ وَاسْجُدْ لِلْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ

Do not prostrate to me, O Salmān, instead, prostrate to the Ever-Living who would never die. (Ibn Kathīr)

This tells us that a prostration done as a token of respect for the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not permissible. With that being the truth, how can it become permissible if done before a saint, or an elder or *pīr*?

3. From: هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ (here is the fulfillment of my early dream - 100), we learn that the fulfillment of the interpretation of a dream could sometimes take a long time to materialize - as it was in the present case when it manifested itself after forty, or eighty, years. (Ibn Jarīr & Ibn Kathīr)

4. The words: فَدَاحَسَنَ بِيْ (He favoured me - 100) said by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام prove that if a person after having been suffering from a disease or disaster, finds him or her delivered from it, then, following the traditional way of prophets, he or she must show gratitude to Allah for this deliverance, and forget about any remembrance of that disease or disaster.

5. From the statement: إِنَّ رَبِّيْ لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَاءُ (Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way - 100), we learn that, when Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He has His subtle ways of arranging things and causes secretly in a manner that no one can get the slightest inkling about it.

6. The words of prayer: تَوَفَّنِيْ مُسْلِمًا (Make me die a Muslim - 101) refer to the prayer of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in which he has wished to die while adhering to his Belief and Faith (Īmān and Islām). This tells us that to make a *du'ā'* for death under particular conditions is not prohibited. And

as for the prohibition of wishing for death in sound and authentic Ahādīth, the purpose there is to tell people that it is not correct to go about asking for death just because of depression from worldly hardships or simple lack of patience. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: Let no one ask for death because of some hardship. If one has to say something like that, let him say: 'Yā Allāh, keep me alive as long as life is better for me, and give me death when death is better for me.'

Verses 102 - 109

ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ ۚ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ أَجْمَعُوا
أَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ
﴿١٠٣﴾ وَمَا تَسْأَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ۗ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾
وَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ آيَةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ يَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا
مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾
أَفَأَمِنُوا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ غَاشِيَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ أَوْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ
لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا
وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي ۖ وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا
مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ ۗ أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي
الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۖ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ
خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۖ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you. And you were not there before them when they determined their object and they were planning devices. [102]

And most of the people are not going to believe, even though you long for it. [103] And you do not ask of them a reward for it. It is nothing but a lesson for all the (people of the) worlds. [104]

How many a sign there is in the heavens and the Earth

which they pass by and they are heedless to it. [105] And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating partners with Him. [106]

Do they feel secure from that there comes to them Allah's enveloping punishment or that there comes to them the Hour suddenly while they are not conscious of it? [107]

Say, 'This is my way. I call (people) to Allah with full cognition - myself and my followers. And pure is Allah. And I am not among the Mushriks*.' [108]

And We did not send before you (messengers) other than men from the people of the towns whom We inspired with revelation. Have they not travelled in the land where they would have seen how was the fate of those before them? And surely the abode of the Hereafter is much better for those who fear Allah. Would you, then, still not understand? [109]

Commentary

After a full description of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, first to come in the verses cited above is an address to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you), and that 'you were not there with the brothers of Yūsuf when they had decided to throw Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the well and were making plans for it.'

The purpose of choosing to say this is that the very act of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in describing this story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام correctly and in full details is a clear proof of his being a prophet and recipient of revelation. The reason is that this story dates back to thousands of years before his time. Neither was he present there on the scene to have described it as an eye witness, nor was he ever taught by anyone to have consulted books of history, or heard it from a teacher and described it. Therefore, there is no way he could have known it in the manner he did except that it be Divine revelation itself.

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has considered it sufficient to say that 'you were not there.' It has not deemed it necessary to mention that this information did not come to him through another person or book because

*. Those who associate partners with Allah

the whole Arabia knew that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was an Ummiyy - that is, he did not learn to read and write from anyone. And also known to everyone was that he had lived his whole life in Makkah al-Mu‘azzamah. He did make one of his trips to Syria with his uncle Abū Ṭalib, a trip in which he came back home while still enroute. The second trip he made was for business. He finished his work there and returned in a few days. In this trip too, there was no chance of his meeting some scholar or going to an educational institution. Therefore, at this place, it was not considered necessary to mention it. And at another occasion in the Holy Qur’an this too was further clarified by saying: مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَٰذَا, that is, ‘you did not know them (events) before this (the revelation of the Qur’ān), neither you nor your people -11:49”

Imām Al-Baghawī has said that the Jews and the Quraysh had joined hands to test the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. For this purpose, they had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ to tell them everything about Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) as it had happened to him, if he was true in his claim of prophethood. When he told them what he had learnt through Divine revelation, they still remained sticking to their disbelief and denial. This shocked the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thereupon, said in the next verse was: ‘And most of the people are not going to believe’ - even though, the proofs of his being a prophet were clear, and even if he himself longed for it, or tried his best. The sense of the statement is: ‘Your duty is to spread the call and seek the betterment of people. That you succeed in it is not in your control nor is this your responsibility nor should you grieve over it.’

After that it was said: وَمَا تَسْأَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ, that is, ‘your mission is to tell them the truth and call them to the straight path. For this you do not ask them to give you something in return - which could have caused them to find it difficult to listen to him or follow him. In fact, what you are telling them is for their own good. It is only an advice to heed to and a lesson to learn from. And it is for everyone. The text here also carries a hint to the effect: When the purpose behind your effort is no worldly gain, in fact it is nothing but the reward of the Hereafter and the betterment of your people, then, that purpose of yours already stands achieved. Why would you then grieve over it?

Then, in verse 105, the attitude of the disbelievers is portrayed by saying:

وَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ آيَةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُونَ

How many a sign there is in the heavens and the Earth which they pass by and they are heedless to it.

The sense is that these people are not of the kind who would simply not listen to a well-wisher out of their obstinacy. They are worse. They would not even learn from the very open signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā visible to them all the time, yet keep passing by them without paying any attention and without wondering whose signs they were. These signs of Divine wisdom and power are widely spread out and many in number. Out of these are many signs which remind people of punishments which descended upon past peoples, and they themselves see their overturned habitations, but they would still refuse to learn their lesson.

This was a description of people who simply did not believe in the existence of Allah Ta'ālā, the great Creator, and in His wisdom and power. Mentioned next are those who do believe in Allah as the Creator, but also associate other things as partners in His Divinity. It was said:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating partners with Him - 106.

It means that those of them who profess a belief in Allah would do so by lacing it with Shirk. They would suggest others as partners in the attributes of knowledge and power which are exclusive for Allah Ta'ālā - which is rank injustice, and ignorance.

Ibn Kathīr has said that included under the sense of this verse are Muslims who, despite having *Īmān*, are involved with different kinds of *Shirk*. According to the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: The most dangerous of things I apprehend for you is the small Shirk. When the Ṣaḥābah asked as to what could that be, he said: Hypocrisy is the small Shirk. Similarly, swearing by someone or something other than Allah has been called Shirk in another Ḥadīth. (Ibn Kathīr from Tirmidhi) Vows and offerings (Mannat and Niyāz) in the name of anyone

other than Allah is also included under it, on which there is a consensus of Muslim jurists.

After that, in verse 107, questioned and deplored is their heedlessness and ignorance as to how could these people, despite their denial and rebellion, become so carefree of the possibility that there may come on them some punishment from Allah which overtakes them from all sides, or that the fateful Hour of the Day of Doom itself descends upon them all of a sudden while they are not ready for it?

In verse 108, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to state his position before these people:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي ۖ وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ -

"Say, (you believe it or not) 'This is my way. I call (people) to Allah with full cognition - myself and my followers. And pure is Allah. And I am not among the associators - 108."

It means that the *da'wah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not based on some summary view of things, instead, it is the outcome of insight, reason and wisdom. In this act of 'full cognition,' the Holy Prophet ﷺ has included his followers as well. According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ it refers to the noble Ṣaḥābah, may Allah be pleased with them all. They are the soldiers of Allah *subhānahū wa Ta'ālā*. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ said: The Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are the best people of this whole Ummah. Their hearts are pure and their knowledge is deep. They are far removed from formality. Allah Ta'ālā has chosen them to accompany and serve their Rasūl. You should learn their morals, habits and ways because they are the ones who are on the straight path.

It is also possible to take the expression: مَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي (and my followers) in the general sense whereby it would mean every person who is doing the duty of conveying the *da'wah* of the Rasūl of Allah to his Ummah right through the last day of the Qiyāmah. According to Kalbi and Ibn Zayd, this verse also makes it necessary for one who claims to follow the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he should spread his *da'wah* among people and make the teaching of the Qur'ān available to all. (Maḥzarī)

The last sentence of verse 108 is: **سُبْحَنَ اللَّهُ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ** (And pure is Allah [that is, free from *Shirk*]. And I am not among the Mushriks [that is, not of those who practice *Shirk*]). Since, a little earlier, mention was made that there are people who, when they profess belief in Allah, would mix it up with *Shirk*, whether open or padded or concealed. Therefore, he has declared that he has absolutely nothing to do with *Shirk*. The gist of what has been said here is: My *da'wah* does not aim at inviting people to become my servants. In fact, I myself am, also a servant of Allah - and it is this kind of servitude, servitude to none but Him, that I invite people to. However, since I am the *dā'i* (the original maker of this call), it is obligatory that faith be put in me.

To this, the disbelievers of Makkah used to object. They took the plea that a Rasūl or messenger of Allah should not be a human being. He should, rather, be an angel. A reply to this doubt has been given in the next verse where it was said: **وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى** : It means that their thinking that it is an angel who should be the messenger and prophet of Allah and that a human being cannot occupy this station is baseless and ineffectual. Quite contrary to this, the case is just the reverse - that is, for human beings, a prophet of Allah has always been a human being. Nevertheless, he is distinct from human beings in general in that the Wahy and message of Allah Ta'ālā comes to him directly. It is never the outcome of an individual effort or act by anyone. It is always Allah Ta'ālā Himself who would choose from among his servants the one who, in His knowledge and judgement, is the fittest for this mission. And this selection is based on particular attributes of personal excellence which are not found among human beings at large.

Onwards from here, there is an admonition to those who contravene the instructions given by the maker of the call on behalf of Allah (*dā'i*), and invite the wrath and punishment of Allah upon them. It was said:

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ط وَلَدُوا الْآخِرَةَ خَيْرٌ
لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا ط أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

Have they not travelled in the land where they would have seen how was the fate of those before them? And surely the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who fear Allah. Would you, then, still not understand? - 109

and continue to prefer the short-lived comfort of the present world over the everlasting and perfect blessings and comforts of the 'Ākhirah.

Rules and Guidance

The Difference between the News of the Unseen and the Knowledge of the Unseen

1. The statement: **ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ** (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you - 102) has appeared in the same words in verse 44 of Sūrah Āl-'Imrān in the context of the story of Sayyidah Maryam, that is: **ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ** (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you - 3:44). Then, with a slight change, the same statement appears in verse 49 of Sūrah Hūd where it is related to the story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام: **تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ** (These are reports from the unseen [events] which We reveal to you - 11:49).

From these verses we learn that Allah Ta'ālā communicates to his prophets many a news of the unseen through Waḥy (revelation). He has particularly blessed our Rasūl ﷺ, known as the Head of all the messengers, with a special portion of the news from the unseen, which is more than that which has been given to all past prophets. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ has informed the Muslim Ummah of many events due to happen right through the day of Qiyāmah, either briefly, or in details. All Aḥādīth given in the Kitāb al-Fitan of Ḥadīth books are full of them.

Since common people take the Knowledge of the Unseen (*ʿIlm al-Ghayb*) only in the sense that a person somehow gets to become aware of the news of the unseen, and this quality is found at its best in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, therefore, they think that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was *ʿAlim al-Ghayb* (knower of the Unseen). But, the Holy Qur'ān has declared in very clear words that: **لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ** (No one in the heavens, or on the Earth, knows the unseen except Allah - 27:65) which proves that no one, other than Allah Ta'ālā, can be called the *ʿAlim al-Ghayb* or the Knower of the Unseen. The *ʿIlm* of *al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen) is the unique attribute of Allah Ta'ālā. Taking an apostle, messenger, prophet or angel as a sharer in this attribute amounts to equating him with Allah, and is what the Christians do, who declare a Rasūl to be the son of God, and a partner in Godhead. The

verses of the Holy Qur'ān quoted here make the truth of the matter very clear. It stands settled that the *ʿIlm* of *al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen) is an exclusive attribute of Allah Taʿālā and the only *ʿĀlim al-Ghayb* (the Knower of the Unseen) is *Allah jalla thanā'uh* Himself. However, there are many news of the unseen which Allah Taʿālā does give to his messengers through the medium of Waḥy (revelation). This, in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, is not known as the *ʿIlm* of *al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen). Since common people do not understand this fine difference, they tend to take the news of the unseen as the knowledge of the unseen. This is why when one adheres to the terminology of the Qur'ān and asserts that no one, other than Allah, can claim to know what is unseen, they would prefer to differ, rather than accept truth as it is.

Messengers are from Men

2. From the word: رَجَالاً (*rijālan* : men) in verse 109:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رَجَالاً نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ

And We did not send before you [messengers] other than men from the people of the towns - 109,

we learn that messengers are always men. A woman cannot become a *nabiyy* (prophet) and *rasūl* (messenger).

Imām Ibn Kathīr has reported the consensus of 'Ulamā that Allah Taʿālā has not made any woman a *nabiyy* or *rasūl*. Some 'Ulamā have identified some women as being a *nabiyy* or prophet, for example, Sayyidah Sārah, the wife of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidah Maryam, the mother of Sayyidnā ʿIsā عليه السلام. The reason is that there are particular words in the Holy Qur'ān about these three respected women which give the impression that angels talked to them as Divinely commanded, gave them good news, or they themselves came to know something through the medium of Divine revelation. But the majority of 'Ulamā, though they do accept that the words of such verses prove that these respected women had a high spiritual rank in the sight of Allah Taʿālā, but, according to them, these words are not sufficient as proofs of their being prophets and messengers.

Messengers are from Towns

3. The expression: أَهْلِ الْقُرَى (men from the people of the towns) appear-

ing in the verse quoted immediately above tells us that Allah Ta'ālā sends his messengers generally from among those who live in cities and towns. Messengers are not from among those who reside in the countryside and forest lands - because the dwellers of these habitations are generally rustic, hard and less perfect in comprehension and understanding. (Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī & others)

Verses 110 - 111

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اسْتَيْسَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوْا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِّبُوا جَاءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۖ
فَنَجَّىٰ مَنْ نَّشَاءُ ۖ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١١٠﴾ لَقَدْ
كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ ۖ لِأُولَى الْأَلْبَابِ ۖ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ
وَلَكِن تَصَدِّقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً
لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

(Punishment was often delayed) until when the messengers were in despair and thought that they were wrong in their estimation, Our help came to them, then saved were those whom We willed. And Our punishment is not averted from the guilty. [110]

Surely, in the narratives of these, there is a lesson for the people of understanding. It is not an invented story, rather, a confirmation of what has been before it, and an elaboration of everything, and guidance and mercy for a people who believe. [111]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was the sending of prophets who invited people to take the straight path, and also answered there were some doubts about them. Then, people were admonished that they do not take into consideration the sad end they would face as a result of their antagonism towards prophets of Allah. Only if they were to pay some attention and look around and read signs from ruined cities and the history of lost places they pass by, they would find out how harsh has been the sad end of those who had opposed the blessed prophets, and that too, right here in this world. The habitation of the people of

Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام was overturned upside down. The people of 'Ād and Thamūd were destroyed through various punishments. And the punishment of the Hereafter, that is far more severe.

Then, towards the end, they were instructed that the pain and pleasure of the present life is, after all, very short-lived. One's real concern should be about the life to come, the 'Ākhirah, the Hereafter, where one shall stay for ever, and where the pain, or pleasure, too shall be eternal. So, it was made clear that a good end of life in the 'Ākhirah depends on Taqwā, the fear of Allah and the abstention from sins, and which, in a nutshell, means that one should strictly adhere to all commandments of the Shari'ah.

Since the purpose in the previous verses was to warn people of the time by telling them to take their lesson from what had happened to past prophets and their communities, therefore, in the next verse (110), one of their doubts was removed. The doubt they had was about the warnings of Divine punishment given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They were hearing about it from him for a long time, but they did not see any punishment coming upon them. This made them all the more daring. If there was some punishment to come, it would have come by now, they thought. Therefore, it was said that Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy and wisdom, would often keep giving respite to erring and sinning people - and this respite, at times, could also become fairly long. That is why contumacious people become more daring and aggressive which causes a certain anxiety to prophets. So, it was said:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اسْتَيْسَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِّبُوا جَاءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا فَنُجِّىٰ مَنْ نَّشَاءُ وَلَا يَرُدُّ بَأْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

(Punishment was often delayed) until when the messengers were in despair and thought that they were wrong in their estimation, Our help came to them, then saved were those whom We willed. And Our punishment is not averted from the guilty - 110).

To explain it in detail, it can be said, that: 'The disbelieving and disobedient people of past communities were given long respites, until when, because of the punishment not coming upon them, the messengers were in despair over the possibility that the punishment of Allah will not come upon such people and truth will not manifest itself in the manner

and at the time they had hoped it to be, and thought that, while determining the time of the Divine promise, they were wrong in their estimation - that Allah Ta'ālā had not told them of a definite time, and the time was fixed by them as based on particular signs. It was in this state of despair that Our help came to them, that is, the punishment on disbelievers came as promised, then saved from the punishment were those 'whom We willed (that is, believers in prophets were saved and disbelievers were destroyed) because Our punishment is not averted from the guilty,' instead, it does come upon them, therefore, the disbelievers of Makkah should not be in any doubt about a delay in the punishment due. [Bayān al-Qur'ān: Gist of Tafsīr by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī]

The word: كَذَبُوا (kudhibū : were wrong) in verse 110 has been read as in the well-known reading (Qirā'at) of the Qur'ān - and the Tafsīr (exegesis or explanation) which we have chosen to follow is the one which is most sound and free from doubts. The essential sense of the word: كَذَبُوا (kudhibū) is to find one's estimation or thinking as being wrong, which is a kind of Ijtihādī mistake (as based on personal opinion), and some such Ijtihādī mistake can issue forth from the blessed prophets. However, there is a difference between prophets عليهم السلام and other *mujtahids*, that is, when some Ijtihādī mistake issues forth from the prophets عليهم السلام, Allah Ta'ālā would not let them stay by that mistake, rather, He would make them become aware of it and enable them to see reality clearly. Other *mujtahids* do not occupy this station. The event of the Peace Pact of Ḥudaibiyah associated with the Holy Prophet ﷺ is sufficient as proof on this subject - because it has been stated in the Holy Qur'ān that this event is based on the dream which was seen by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He had seen that he was doing the Ṭawāf of the Baytullah with his Ṣaḥābah - and the dream of the blessed prophets is also an imperative form of revelation - therefore, the happening of this event became certain. But, in the dream itself, no particular time or duration was identified for it. The Holy Prophet ﷺ, according to his estimation, thought that it would happen the same year. So, he announced it before his Ṣaḥābah and taking a good number of them with him left for Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah for their 'Umra. But, the Quraysh confronted them enroute and they could not avail of their intended Ṭawāf and 'Umra. In fact, the full manifestation (of the dream) came to unfold itself two years later, in the Hijrah year 8, in the form of

the Conquest of Makkah. And from this event, it became apparent that the dream he had seen was true and certain. But, the time for it which, by signs or estimation, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had taken as the time, was not what it actually was - but that mistake was compensated right then.

Similarly, the expression: *قَدْ كَذَبُوا* (*qad kudhibū* : were wrong) in the verse under reference also carries the same sense, that is, the punishment which was to come upon the disbelievers was delayed while the prophets had estimated a time for it in their minds. When this punishment did not come at that time, they thought that they had made a mistake in determining the time for it. This Tafsīr has been reported from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās ؓ. ‘Allāma Al-Ṭibī has said that this report is Ṣaḥīḥ (sound) because it has been mentioned in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī. (Maḥzarī)

In some readings (*Qirā’aat*) of the Qur’ān, this word has appeared with a doubled sound on the letter: ذال (*dhāl*), that is: *قَدْ كَذَّبُوا* (*qad kudhdhibū*) as well. This word has been derived from the verbal noun: *تَكْذِيب* (*takdhīb* : falsification). Given this reading, the sense would be: The prophets had determined an estimated time when the punishment would come, but when the punishment did not come at that time, they had apprehensions about their believers themselves, lest they should not falsifying them on the basis that their statement did not turn out to be true. These were the circumstances under which Allah Ta‘ālā made His promise prove true, punishment fell on the deniers, believers were saved from it, and thus, overcome they did.

In the opening statement of the last verse of the Sūrah, it was said:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولَى الْأَلْبَابِ

Surely, in the narratives of these, there is lesson for the people of understanding - 111.

This statement may be pointing to the stories of all prophets عليهم السلام in the Qur’ān and also to the particular story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ؑ which has been narrated in this Sūrah - because, through this later event, it has become absolutely clear that the obedient servants of Allah are supported and helped in so many ways when they are taken out from a deep well and made to sit on a high throne and are rescued from the threat of disgrace all the way to the zenith of the finest in grace and hon-

our, not to mention the practitioners of ill-will and deception who ultimately end up in sheer shame.

Said next is:

مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَى وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ

It is not an invented story, rather, a confirmation of what has been before it ...,

that is, of the books revealed before it - because, this story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (Joseph) ﷺ has been mentioned in the Torah and the Injīl as well. And Ḥaḍrat Wahb ibn Munabbih says: There is no Scripture which does not have the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ in it. (Maḥzarī)

And in the last sentence of the verse, it is said: وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ, that is, this Qur'ān is 'an elaboration of everything' (which means that the Qur'ān has details of everything which human beings need in religion - in fields like 'Ibādāt (worship of Allah), dealings, morals, social living, government, politics and many others, including injunctions and instructions about all individual and collective concerns of human life - they are all there).

Then, it was said that this Qur'ān is 'guidance and mercy for a people who believe.' The restriction of those who have 'Imān or Faith has been placed here because its benefit can be enjoyed by only those who believe. It goes without saying that, though the Qur'ān is nothing but mercy and guidance for disbelievers as well, but it is due to their own misconduct and disobedience that this mercy and guidance has become heavy and unwholesome for them.

Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr has said: The purpose behind the whole Sūrah Yūsuf and the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ narrated therein is to comfort the Holy Prophet ﷺ. All this is to tell him that his sufferings at the hands of his people have been the lot of past prophets too. But, in the end, Allah Ta'ālā enabled his prophets to overcome - and in his case too, this is what was going to happen.

The Commentary
on
SŪRAH YŪSUF
ends here.